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OF THE
BRISTOL MERCURY.

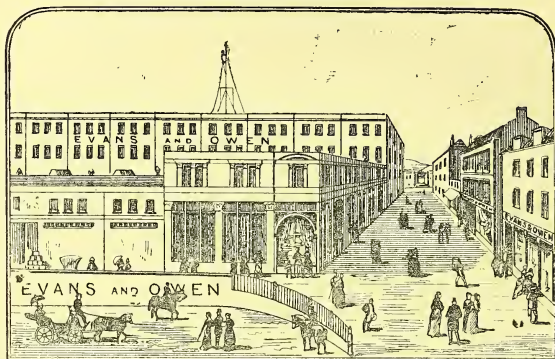
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P R E F A C E .

THE following pages embody the results of a careful personal inquiry, undertaken in November last by a Commissioner appointed by the *Bristol Mercury*, under the conviction that as public interest had been keenly excited in the state of the slums of London, an opportunity offered to do real service to the very poor of Bristol by drawing attention to the condition of their homes.

The articles awakened a deep and widespread sympathy throughout the city, and were quoted in public meetings and in pulpits, the ministers of religion testifying that the state of things described had been within their knowledge, and the subject of their appeals to the Christian public, for years. They were also brought before the Sanitary Authority by a member of that body, the Chairman of the School Board, and a sub-committee was appointed to consider the powers of the Authority with regard to the evils described. One substantial good has at least resulted from the *Mercury* inquiry ; it has secured to the Medical Officer of Health the much needed assistance of an additional Sanitary Inspector. Another consequence was a memorial to the Bishop from the clergy of the city, and the nomination by his lordship, with the cordial approval of the Mayor, of a most influential and thoroughly representative committee of inquiry into the condition of the very poor in Bristol. In this step the city has the distinction of anticipating the action of the Government, for immediately on the re-assembling of Parliament a Royal Commission was appointed upon the dwellings of the poor, which will, no doubt, institute a very general and exhaustive inquiry.

The following pages have been reprinted from the columns of the *Bristol Mercury* in compliance with numerous requests, and in the belief that the mass of carefully tested and reliable information which they contain will be of material service in any further investigation of the subject.

35, BROAD STREET,

February 29th, 1884,

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HOMES OF THE BRISTOL POOR.

REPRINTED FROM THE

BRISTOL MERCURY.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROGRESS ALREADY MADE.

THE cry of "improved dwellings for the poor," with more perfect sanitary arrangements for the houses of the working classes, is at the present moment directing attention to the densely-populated areas of large cities to an extent, perhaps, never before experienced even in this age of sanitary and educational progress. It was raised in Bristol, had gathered force, and under exceptional circumstances had led to certain practical results, years before it went forth with the startling energy now causing it to be heard throughout the kingdom. Much has been done—much yet remains to be done; and in a series of articles written specially for the *Mercury and Daily Post* it is our intention to give the reader the result of information gained by visits to the thickly-populated areas of the city, with a view to showing what has been accomplished in the past, the condition of the homes of the poor at present, and what possibly remains to be done in the future. We have heard much of late of "Squalid Liverpool," "Outcast London," and indignant demands upon Sanitary Authorities on the part of large cities as to why they should wait for sanitary reform. The traps of pestilent cellar dwellings have been lifted, the doors of fever dens opened, and the lids of "coffin homes" have been ruthlessly torn off to expose to public view the filth and disease generating in the very heart of big towns. But though

Bristol has long ago girded herself up, buckled on the armour of health, and battled manfully with these evils, she would, perhaps, do well to wait awhile before she thanks heaven she is not as other cities are. We shall have to narrate instances of crowding of large families into single rooms, of abject poverty and want, of wearied struggles for daily bread, of misery and wretchedness endured by hundreds of men, women, and little children "cribb'd and cabin'd" rather than housed, dwelling together with little of the sweetness and none of the comfort of domestic life, and who, if they have ever heard "There's no place like home," must fondly imagine it is to come in "the sweet by and by," so little has been their experience of it in the present or past. We have used the word "crowding" instead of overcrowding advisedly, as these cases are stated to be well within the present law regarding "houses and parts of houses which are let in lodgings or occupied by more than one family," and are considered to have the requisite 350 cubic feet of space for each adult—two children under ten counting as one. In one of these dwellings, as we shall show in a future paper, we found 23 persons—each room occupied by a family, and in one room there were living and sleeping a man and his wife and six children, eight persons in all, with one bed for the whole. But this is within the

present law. They were under the watchful eye of the sanitary inspector, there was a certain amount of enforced cleanliness, the passages were white-washed, the creaky stairs scrubbed down, and the ceiling of the room itself was being limed and repaired. The word "overcrowding" involuntarily escapes the lips of the visitor. But the sanitary officer shakes his head. It is "within the bond." He dares go no further without new powers. One feels grateful as he descends the stairs that at any rate the "outside of the platter" has had the merciful consideration of the law, and we surreptitiously book the word "overcrowded." Sir Richard Cross told the people of Paisley on Friday that the only way to remedy these matters was by State interference—that they had good Acts of Parliament, and it only remained for municipal authorities to take up the matter, and then "there would be an end of the vice and the misery that at present exist in the dwellings of the poor." The municipal authorities of Bristol have interfered in a practical way with the aid of a stout sweeping brush and plentiful supplies of chloride of lime; but it is questionable, looking at the interpretation hitherto given of the law here, whether the regulations for lodging-houses, or even the Artisans' Dwellings Act, will give the exceedingly comprehensive powers claimed by Sir Richard Cross. But Bristol has much to be thankful for. It must be admitted that these houses are zealously looked after. The worst courts in the city are visited daily, swept out, and the closets in common flushed, cleansed, and disinfected; and spots that formerly were the very centres of infection are rendered innocuous by the most determined and persistent action on the part of the sanitary inspectors. Bristol has now no "fever quarter" where disease is perennial and certain types of virulent fevers endemic. Typhus, typhoid fever, and small pox have hardly forty-eight hours' existence in the city before they become known to the sanitary officers, and they are promptly dealt with and successfully stamped out. The Medical Officer of Health boldly meets and grapples with these, and only takes off his hat to scarlet fever—not from its virulence, but from the difficulty of isolating it, as 65 per cent. of these cases are those of children whose ages range from five years to that of infants at the breast, and therefore impossible to remove. It must also be remembered that scores of houses and many of the lowest courts and alleys have been swept away by the progress of street improvements. This has been followed by improved drainage, and lastly has come the sanitary work of the Medical Officer of Health. The opening up of Lewin's mead has got rid

of many of the worst tenements. By the widening of Back street there disappeared the "Rookery," the celebrated Rackhay, Corosation place, the "Cockpit," and Gun yard, and its stifling courts, where 80 persons died of cholera in two days in 1849. New Baldwin street has done away with Maiden Tavern lane, one of the places which it was positively dangerous to pass through at night. In Marsh street dilapidated dwellings crammed with human beings, ten families in a house, one to each room, and nine persons of all ages sleeping together, have been swept away. Similar houses in Host street and Rupert street and Lewin's mead have made way for large warehouses. It was in Lewin's mead where the Inspector of Nuisances shortly after his appointment found nine persons, men, women, and children, sleeping on one bed. Similarly, Fox court, in the Pithay, and the alleys in St. James's back, honeycombed with human cells, where 16 beings were found herding in one small room, having fallen before the march of street improvements. Some of the courts in Redcross street are also disappearing; hovels in Fife street have been supplanted by the Harbour Railway, and alleys in Old Temple street have given way to the new broad thoroughfare, Victoria street. Concurrent with these street improvements there came the construction of thousands of houses in the suburbs, all tending to "spread" the population, and aid the work of the sanitarian. In the Registrar's annual return for the present year Bristol was estimated to have in its population 47.8 persons to an acre, London 52.5, Birmingham 49.4, Manchester 79.0, Liverpool 108.8. Bristol stands the lowest of these quoted, but the population is still very dense in the Dings, St. Jude's, Barton hill, Catherine Mead street, Essex street, Still House lane, and Philip street, and neighbourhood of Mill lane, Bedminster, Little James street, Earl street, and Eugene street, St. James's, and one or two places in the Hotwell road.

The two subjects of the homes of the poor and the sanitary condition of the population at large are so closely associated, and act and react upon one another so directly, that an investigation like the present naturally leads one at the very outset to look at the general sanitary surroundings of the places dealt with—what has been attempted, the progress made, and the results achieved. In many towns whose sanitary pulse beats feebly and the action of whose municipal bodies is sluggish, loud outcries are being raised against the local authorities. In Bristol, justice and duty compel one not only to admit healthy, vigorous sanitary action, but to detail the salient features of a work which redounds to the credit of all concerned, and has raised the city to the first rank amongst the

healthiest towns in the kingdom. In 1850-52 the normal rate of mortality of Bristol was 28 per thousand. For the third quarter of the present year it was, according to the Registrar-General's return, 15.3; and this reduction during the past seven years has been a progressive one. It should be remembered that formerly the drainage of parts of the city was execrable. Even Clifton, like the slicmiest court in St. Jude's, had its houses drained into cesspools. But the old Commissioners of Sewers bestirred themselves, and, following their efforts, the Local Board of Health, and afterwards the Urban Sanitary Authority, have carried out a most perfect system of sewage over the whole city. About 150 miles of new drains, at a cost of £211,000, have been constructed since 1850, and the borrowed money, with the exception of a small sum left on the Avon intercepting sewer district, has been paid off. In carrying out this work the authorities have steadily adhered to the exceptional plan of "unventilated sewers;" making use of the natural advantages of good gradients, tidal water, and a plentiful water carriage, they constructed large main sewers, and they entirely depend upon everything being well carried away by flushing. This is well known to be an unorthodox system of sewerage, and we remember Mr. Davies saying in a paper on house sanitation, read at Gloucester in January last:—"I here represent a city of sanitary anomalies—a city of over 212,000 inhabitants, where all the sewers are unventilated—a city in which all the storm waters runs into the public sewers and flushes them—a city the medical officer of which is an utter disbeliever in the pythogenic origin of disease, and yet a city in which the general rate of mortality, as well as the rate of mortality from zymotic disease, is lower than any other town of its population in Europe; and in which the deaths of infants in proportion to the births is lower than in any town in England except Derby." All the street gratings are water trapped, and probably, with syphons and ventilators for each house, some would consider the system complete. Apart from this drainage work no less than 600 courts and alleys, formerly reeking with filth and soaked with sewage matter, have been flagged, channelled, and properly drained. During 1864-5, in the typhus fever epidemic in St. Jude's, after a visit of inspection by Dr. Buchanan, one of her Majesty's Inspectors, Mr. D. Davies, the present medical officer of health, was elected medical inspector under the permissive powers then given to the Local Board of Health. He was appointed with many misgivings, owing to a belief that the sanctity of the Englishman's "castle-home" was at length about to be rudely assailed.

These fears, however, were soon dissipated. Mr. Davies, to professional skill gained by large experience and zealous study of the spread of fever and the theory of the germinal and specific origin of zymotic diseases, added administrative tact that has been one of the most important factors in bringing about the present ameliorated condition of the homes of the poor in Bristol. Suasion rather than force was his method. He at first had three assistant inspectors, then four, and afterwards five, as the work increased, and the city was divided into five districts. These men had to report and see to the removal of infected cases for isolation. They had also to look after the street scavenging and watering, the fumigating of houses, disinfecting of clothes, and other similar duties; and they had instructions to find immediate remedies for all urgent cases of defective house drainage not requiring structural work. They were to visit every court and alley in their several districts two or three times a week, and see that they were clean; and, where necessary, assistants were provided them to promptly do menial work often of a most objectionable but still urgent character. They were to make friends with the poor rather than to display any officialism; and so successful were they in thus catching the spirit of their instructions that up to the present day the two inspectors—to which number the five have been reduced in these times of severe economy—are welcomed in every alley and court, from cellar to garret, as a friend of the family. Cases for the magistrates, under the Act, have been brought only where obstinate refusal was encountered, but the work has been done far more effectually in the way described, and the poor occupants of top rooms where landlords have been called upon to mend roofs which were little better than sieves, and the renters of basements which have been floored or paved and rendered free from drainage percolation, gratefully recognise the inspector as the active agent in these sanitary godsend. In this way the inspectors glean all information required as to sudden outbreaks of disease, the condition of the occupants of tenement houses, the state of the rooms, and the sanitary surroundings, defects in which are often reported to them by residents of the poorest districts. All this is done without unnecessary display of the compulsory powers now strengthening the hands of the sanitary officers, and it is done so unobtrusively that we remember the horror with which the Medical Officer of Health received the proposition to put his assistant inspectors in uniform. So firmly did he believe that it would deprive him of three-fourths of that suasive power which had proved so successful that it was whispered

at the time that he contemplated sending in his resignation if it were carried out. A compromise was effected by taking three of the inspectors for scavenging purposes and leaving only two out of uniform for the special work of the sanitary officer; but how these two can cover the five districts effectually is a problem yet to be solved. We have dwelt minutely on the nature of the work of these officers, because of the exceedingly important functions with which they have been entrusted. Their work, allied to that of the street improvement schemes, has been to some extent accomplishing the object of the Artisans' Dwellings Act, without the expense which a free recourse to the Act in an old city would entail on the ratepayers. It is true they have broken somewhat through the red tape of officialism in practising a little of the direct State interference which Sir Richard Cross recommends; but to their practical work under the sanction of the Sanitary Authority and the guidance of the Medical Officer of Health, Bristol owes very much of its present freedom from zymotic disease. In fact they have been the sanitary detective force, who, finding disease skulking about in a healthy or even doubtful neighbourhood, have arrested it on suspicion of being on the premises for an unlawful purpose, and have forthwith "run it in." Matters were far different in 1865, when the writer accompanied the medical inspector (Mr. Davies) through the fever districts of St. Jude's during the typhus epidemic, and saw in room after room the unfortunate victims in an advance stage of the disease, lying naked five or six in a row on the bare floor, with a few rags as an apology for a covering. In one morning Mr. Davies found no less than 150 cases in an area which up to that time had truly been the fever quarter of Bristol—a spot where typhus was then more or less endemic, and where there was an annual typhus mortality. In six months that outbreak was stamped out. It was there the active sanitary work began. Every court and alley was sought out, reported upon, and by the advice of Mr. F. Ashmead, the borough surveyor, and Mr. Davies, the Sanitary Authority had them all flagged and cleansed, whitewashed and drained. The landlords were compelled to provide more perfect closets, and a water supply accessible to each house. Practical lessons in drain flushing were given to the poor, and this work was attended to every morning by men under the Sanitary officers. In 1882, in addition to obtaining remedies from the owners or occupiers in nearly a thousand cases, these inspectors and their subordinates visited 1967 houses, chiefly of the poor, cleansed 9515 courts, and 4173 closets, limewashed 315 alleys and 477 closets, fumigated 172 houses, and disinfected 5875 articles of clothing. The first two or

three items will probably create some surprise at such a work being necessary so many years after the passing of the compulsory Act of 1872. But daily experience is afforded of the absolute necessity of such work being carried out by the authorities themselves if the densely covered areas of a populous city are to be kept healthy. Steady progress is being made, but years will probably elapse before the people of the lowest districts can be fully trusted with their own sanitary arrangement. Still when the sanitary officers first began they found in some instances as many as fifty or sixty persons in a court using one closet. No instance of that kind probably could be found now. Houses let out in "tenements" were found in some cases to contain from thirty to forty people. Under the old Act the grossest of these cases were dealt with, but the offenders could only be ordered to abate the nuisance reported to be injurious to health. The new Act gave powers by which the local authority could require in houses inhabited by more than one family 300 cubic feet of space for every inmate of a bedroom, and 350 for every inmate of a common room where people lived and slept. Sanitarians pressed for 400 feet, but they did not succeed; and it was decided that two children under 10 should count as one. The power given to visit these tenement houses was a great sanitary boon. A few cases first dealt with proved sufficient to exercise a good moral effect all over the city, and in most of the old-fashioned large houses, some of them dilapidated mansions of wealthy tradesmen of the olden time, the landlords yielded, though reluctantly, to the inevitable, and reduced the number of families occupying the rooms, while the occupants themselves proved open to some little instruction on the part of the inspectors—and all the more so from the friendliness with which these domiciliary visits were made. This system has been now so developed that the authorities are gradually obtaining, of course for sanitary purposes only, a tabulated record of the house to house visitation in the crowded courts and alleys; and entries are made by the inspectors under the several headings—"state of house," condition of drains, what water used, number of inmates, state of health, remedies necessary, and "what has been done." This detailed analysis, if it is to be carried out with anything like efficiency, will certainly require the services of more than the two inspectors now undertaking the work. Large powers are given them by the regulations for houses occupied by more than one family—these being precisely the places where nearly all the evil has hitherto existed. And though the authorities have perhaps gone as far as the law allows them with

regard to the number of cubic feet for each person, probably much more can yet be done in the way of light and ventilation. Still, quite a revolution has been effected under the stringent regulations for cleansing the walls and ceilings of the rooms, liming staircases, passages, yards, basements, and areas, and the provision of water supplies and water-closet accommodation. We are quite aware that applications have been made to the Sanitary Authority under the Artisans' Dwellings Act to take action with regard to areas considered by memorialists to be unhealthy within the meaning of the Act; and that the desired action was not taken, but these areas will be noticed in a future paper.

From a moral point of view, there is undoubtedly a large field of work which even the many philanthropic agencies of the city have yet scarcely touched; but physically, substantial progress has been made in lessening the evil of crowded dwellings and grappling with the ravages of disease. The fever hospitals have proved invaluable in the last-mentioned work, especially since the several Boards of Guardians have possessed these places of isolation for fever cases. The Bristol Guardians have a hospital for 60 patients at Fishponds, the Barton Regis one for 40 at Eastville, Bedminster a hospital for 20 on the Nubbers, and the Bristol Sanitary Authority a place of isolation for 40 cases in St. Philip's Marsh. In this respect few places in England have done so much preventive work. This has been specially the case with regard to some of the sub-districts of St Philip's, Bread street, St. Jude's, Pinnell's court, George street, Great Ann street, New street, Brick street, Lamb street; the courts in St James's and Redcross street, and a few places in Bedminster. Since 1872 we have had outbreaks of scarlet fever, but typhoid and small-pox have not been epidemic since 1870; and the cases introduced here have been stamped out. There was an unfortunate outbreak of typhus in 1876-77 in the neighbourhood of Redcross street, but after some delay in the removal of cases—

(a delay explained at the time)—this was stamped out, and a few cases in other parts of the city were promptly dealt with and prevented becoming a focus of infection. Since then—beyond the ordinary outbreaks of scarlet fever—we have had no serious epidemics in Bristol, and the improved state of health is manifested by the returns of the Fever Hospital in St. Philip's. In the small-pox epidemic in 1870 there was at one time 22 cases in the hospital, and in one year altogether there were as many as 100 patients passed through the convalescent ward. In 1879 the returns gave small-pox cases 6, fever 10; 1880, small-pox cases 14, fever 16; 1881, small-pox 4, fever 13; 1882, small-pox 3, fever 10. In the year 1876 Bristol stood seventh in the rate of mortality in the 23 large towns, viz:—Brighton 19.6, Sunderland 21.0, Norwich 21.9, Plymouth 22.1, Portsmouth 22.1, London 22.3, Bristol 22.6. From that time Bristol has gradually forged her way towards the top of the list as follows:—

1876	22.6
1877	22.5
1878	22.2
1879	21.9
1880	21.0
1881	19.6
1882	19.1

In the Registrar-General's return for the third quarter of 1883, Bristol, with the low death rate of 15.3, is second on the list of 28 large towns. This speaks of grand achievements in sanitary work in Bristol—achievements of which the city may well be proud. It has specially affected the worst class of dwellings, into which it has let some amount of sweetness and light. There is, doubtless, a boundary line where outside interference must halt, and within which we must trust to increased education to do its work; but the question is whether, without overstepping that line, there is yet a great work to be done in improving the homes of the poor.



CHAPTER II.

COURTS FROM THE BRIDEWELL TO REDCROSS STREET.

WE have to acknowledge, with reference to our first article, letters of thanks, offers of future aid in the investigation thus commenced, and in some instances expressions of apprehension lest we should hesitate to fully reveal the appalling poverty, the squalid misery, and loathsome condition of some of the homes of the poor. These apprehensions appear to have arisen from the somewhat hopeful tone of "The Progress Already Made." Our investigation, however, is intended to be most thorough and complete, and with regard to the present condition of the dwellings of thousands of the poor nothing will be kept back that will tend to make the public acquainted with the real state of things, and the evils now calling so loudly for remedy. The urgency of the case is made more and more apparent every day, and only last week the President of the Local Government Board, Sir Charles Dilke, made a personal visit with the medical officer of health of Shoreditch to some of the worst districts in London. It was with the comprehensive view just referred to that the first article was almost entirely devoted to a general review of the sanitary progress made in Bristol—a progress most exceptional, and which enables one to examine the condition of the "outcast poor" under what should be the most favourable circumstances in a large city where religious philanthropic and benevolent efforts are most widespread—where homes for destitute girls, industrial schools, penitentiaries, preventive homes, and reformatories have found their birth-place, and been cradled and nursed with the fondest care—but where the authorities have not yet considered it expedient to formulate any scheme of improvement under the Artisans' Dwellings Act. It is unfortunate that while both the philanthropist, eager to raise the moral tone of the people, and the sanitarian, zealous in the extreme to keep down the rate of mortality, find their common ground of work in the overcrowded centres of population—admitted to be at once the centres of both physical and moral disease—they too often part company almost at the door. The sympathetic and impulsive humanitarian points out that the very elementary conditions of morality are wanting. Armed with powers so potent that the philanthropist earnestly prays his aid, the experienced

sanitarian calmly sniffs, and declares "he can detect no bad smell positively injurious to public health." The humanitarian directs attention to seven or eight people herded together in a room—to "live, and multiply and die"—the sanitarian forthwith measures the space, counts two children as one adult, and declares they have the requisite cubic feet of air space lawful for human beings under the Act. He compels the landlord to whitemash the walls, he orders the courts to be frequently cleansed, places his sanitary police at the entrance to give an alarm at the first symptoms of the outbreak of fever—like a constable on his beat when he smells fire—and, till the outbreak comes, his work is done. He leaves the philanthropist to do the rest, and hitherto so terrible has been the extent of the evil that the philanthropist has not unnaturally broken down under the weight of the task.

Happily for Bristol, it has, so far as we can learn from preliminary visits and inquiries, no cellar dwellings. In Liverpool the astounding statement has been made that that city possesses no fewer than 10,000 inhabited cellars, in the dingy gloom of which some thirty thousand children must have a constant struggle to survive the fatal effects of dwelling and sleeping in a never-changing fetid atmosphere. In Bristol we have squalid homes, many blind courts, sadly wanting light and ventilation; large, dilapidated tenement houses, where families of human beings are "caged" almost as closely as the group of curious birds and quadrupeds in a travelling menagerie. And some of the latter, carefully nourished and cared for, would form a "happy family" whose "housing" would be pronounced cleanly and comfortable quarters compared with that of the human beings herding together in places we have seen in a day's visit to courts to be found between the centre of the city and St. Jude's. But these are entirely innocent of the underground dens to be found in London and Liverpool. We may, perhaps, still want that "moral uprising" of which Mr. Goschen spoke at Edinburgh a fortnight ago, but the physical force provided by the law has already been quietly brought to bear upon some of the houseowners. They have been warned of their responsibility, and the beneficial results in these

few cases will go some way to justify Mr. Goschen's opinion that the real remedy for the present unwholesome dwellings of the poor is "to insist on a more thorough enforcement of the responsibilities of the owners of property." In numerous cases they will be found to be absentees whose rents are collected by a deputy. In one instance of the most dilapidated tumble-down, crazy-looking buildings, the owner was described as a "minister in London," and the tenants of the wretched rooms that were still considered to be habitable—reduced to a single room in one of the houses—said they paid their rent to a deputy. An adjoining house was closed altogether, and in other instances, where sufficient pressure was put upon the owners, were found house after house in old courts, shut up and untenanted, because the landlord would not carry out the cleaning or repairs demanded by the sanitary officers, or meet the publicity of the action which they threatened to take if he continued to let the unwholesome tenement.

In the city, the poorest homes are those in the dilapidated and faded mansions, which the ever extending warehouses have still left to be divided and subdivided for the use of many families, and the comparatively large houses similarly let off in rooms in small dingy courts. It is with the latter we have to deal at the present moment, and more especially those lying on the way from Bridewell street through the Horsefair, the Quakers' Friars, Merchant street, Redcross street, and the Ropewalk. In St. James's Back, like the neighbourhood of the Pithay and the site now occupied by new Union street, some of the worst of the courts and old houses have been demolished to make room for huge warehouses, the new Police Court buildings, the present Day Industrial School in Silver street, &c. The mere "opening out" process in the construction of these new thoroughfares and the admission of daylight seem to have a magic effect not only on the wretched homes but the occupants themselves. Haul out the dirt into the light of day, and it disappears as though people were ashamed of it. Even in the "blind" courts themselves the grimmest spots and the most haggard and squalid occupants are nearly always to be found the farthest from the entrance and the light. The degree of respectability a court has attained depends as a rule, upon the amount of light it enjoys. The seedy black coats and faded finery draping the front of the old clothes shops of the Horsefair give to the east side of that thoroughfare a sombre and stuffy appearance, but the courts on that side have the most light, and the contrast between them and those on the other side will strike any visitor. In most of the former the occupants are single families, and one

old lady, renting a house of four rooms at 4s. 8d. per week, took a pride in showing her parlour scrupulously neat and tidy, the walls covered with pictures. Even this court had its dingy quarter at the furthest end, but here two families in four rooms compared well with the courts opposite. In one of these houses lived a potter, his wife, and three children, paying 4s. 1d. a week for four rooms, sadly wanting attention, though the tenants "white-lined the apartments themselves the year before last," and here would be a case for Miss Octavia Hill's system of supplying the poor in their own neighbourhood with clean, well-lighted, and well-ventilated dwellings, at rent within their ability to pay. But then the tenant was a fairly well-to-do working man, and many degrees above the poor people of whom we shall have directly to speak. Still, in all the courts to the right of the Horsefair there is a different atmosphere from that of the west side—more air, more light, and with these more brightness and quick, active movement—we may also add more enterprise, for it is here that "halfpenny ices" are manufactured to cool the parched lips of street urchins and holiday folk in summer, and street music is sent out to enliven the dreary days of winter. Taking now a western court, we come to a very different class of poor and their homes. Within a stone's throw is the open space of the Haymarket, and close to that the well-kept carpet-like turf of the pleasure garden into which kind-hearted, philanthropic persons of the parish have changed the old churchyard of St. James's. On a dull day, you would pass the narrow, door-like entrance of this alley without becoming aware of its existence. Entering, we find ourselves in a court of six or eight three-story houses—the exteriors wearing a generally battered and depressing appearance, hemmed in as these dwellings are in what is known as a "blind court," narrow, and without through ventilation. These are "tenement houses"—let room by room to families at 1s. 6d. per week—nearly all blank and miserable-looking homes of the very type specially to be dealt with in any future effort for the improvement of the dwellings of the poor. As one enters them the unsavoury mephitic air peculiar to rooms where people sleep and live in common, seldom wash and rarely change their clothes, is offensive enough, and inside, in the rooms themselves, and on the narrow, dark unventilated staircases, the noxious exhalations make one long for the outer air and the vitalising oxygen. The occupants—labourers, quay rangers, hawkers, and men in uncertain employment—would with difficulty be induced to pay more than 1s. 6d. per week to be "housed" at night. They do not attempt to make "a home." A bedstead without a bed, or in default

a piece of sacking with a bundle of rags on the floor, two shattered chairs, the fragment of a table, and a saucepan, are their household goods. The breadwinner goes out in the morning, and returns to sleep at night—the children of school age are mercifully looked after by the School Board, the one gleam of light and hope in the gloomy social outlook; while the whole family of five or six live and sleep in one room. "How many have you here, mother?" asks my companion as he familiarly addresses the occupant of a lower apartment. "Oh, there's two lone women in the top rooms; husband and wife and three children next room; husband, wife, and three children next; husband, wife and three children next, with an extra room; husband, wife, and two children next, and myself and son down here; that's all!" One of the two old ladies at the top of the house said she had occupied the dreary apartment eleven years, paying 1s. 6d. per week for it. This "rookery" was a sample of the rest—from thirteen to sixteen or seventeen persons in a house, and in some instances husband, wife, and four children living and sleeping in one room. In a case of the latter kind the husband was a hawker at fairs, and was away, but he sent sufficient money home regularly to pay the rent of the room and to keep the family, and despite the grime and wretchedness of the surroundings, the scant and shattered furniture, and the unwholesome atmosphere, there was, blended with the wearied look of the robust young mother, a transient gleam of cheerfulness, suggestive of former brightness, animation, and more than average intelligence, gradually being dwarfed, crushed, and altogether blotted out by the want of a brighter and more wholesome "home." Of the children, the baby, a few months old, was the only one whose face on our first visit wore its natural colour. The others were too black with dirt for one to hazard a guess as to their healthy appearance. But two days later—on a Monday morning—we found them, after the weekly wash, looking moderately healthy, and the eldest had quite a colour in her face, indicative of a free use of the open space of the neighbouring Haymarket as a playground. How long that apparently fresh glow of health could be retained in such surroundings was a question upon which we cared not to dwell. But there was a different sight in the room adjoining. Nearly all the rooms opened on the crazy staircase like so many cupboards. "How's the child, mother?" said my companion, as he tapped and simultaneously lifted the latch of one of these doors, and was confronted by a woman of 70, with dishevelled hair, faded dress, and slatternly look. "He's pooty well," she replied, pointing to a corner of the room. The place appeared

to be entirely empty, so bare was it of any article of furniture. But curled up on a piece of bed-tick in the corner of the room, without covering beyond an old black-cloth frock and under-skirt, was a little pale-faced waif, its limbs grimy with the dirt which, in these places, seems to rise from the floor, exude from the walls, and accumulate everywhere and on everything till it throws off the repulsive sickening odour soon recognised as one leaves the outer air. True, the floor is washed out once a week, but the dirt grows apace. Pitiable was it to see this little one lying, like some wayside flower crushed by a storm and dragged in the mud. The little boy belonged, the old woman said, "to her daughter," who was somewhere in service. He was two years old, and had been living with her in that room from his birth. She had taken him out now and then, but he had never "walked out"—he had no shoes or socks. There was a fire in the grate, but scarcely a vestige of furniture was to be seen, and this picture of "childhood's home" was such a dreary blank that we were glad to leave, though the impression produced was so strong as to lead to two more visits to the little one, who, on the third occasion had been washed, and showed sufficient signs of brightness to set one thinking what a different prospect there might be for him under other conditions. Even here, however, all sense of cleanliness was not entirely lost, as on the Saturday the old woman was busily scrubbing the broken floor of her empty home in preparation for the Sunday. As usual in courts of this class, those who could pay a little more money occupied the rooms of the first house nearest the entrance, and each family here appeared to have the luxury of two rooms—a man and wife in the top rooms, widow and two sons next floor, husband and wife and two children next, and widow and three children the ground floor, the living room of which had an air of comfort, and the walls were covered with small pictures.

The Quakers' Friars, Merchant street, a series of courts, formerly enjoyed an unenviable notoriety for foulness, destitution, and filth. The houses, in the hands of agents who collected the rents for landlords who knew little of their condition and cared less, were nearly tumbling down, and were occupied chiefly by poor Irish, whose children were known to collect potato rinds to boil and eat. Close to these dwellings, with each room filled with a family, were houses of ill-fame. About nine years ago the attention of benevolent citizens was specially drawn to this quarter, and several of the houses in Pope's parade and Frome buildings were purchased and placed under the care of a philanthropic lady. Miss Octavia

Hill's plan, of cleansing the dwellings and gradually improving the character and tone of the occupants was followed out with the best results. Good water and proper closet accommodation were provided, and the principle of a family living in one room was accepted, provided the number in each room was limited. Quite a revolution has been effected in the moral tone of the place, and the occupants more or less work daily for their living. The houses have eight rooms, and, taking one of these dwellings as a sample, it is occupied as follows: Top rooms, one woman, two girls; next floor, one woman, husband, wife, and child; next, two young women, man and wife; ground floor, husband and wife—total 13. The houses are whitelimed periodically, and kept wholesome. Near these, however, is a wretched court of house, belonging to a landlord in a distant part of England. The dwellings show every sign of neglect and decay, and one old Irishwoman told us she paid 2s. 6d. per week, but the house "was not fit for a pig to live in." The surface drainage is bad, and on Friday stagnant water from house slops was lying about. The windows are broken; some of the houses are closed altogether, and in another only two rooms of three are habitable, and the occupants, an old man and his wife, living there for nine years, complained to us badly of nothing being done to the inside of the house. Attempts made to purchase this court of houses have failed, owing to the high price demanded, notwithstanding that some of the houses are shut up and unoccupied. The last enemy seems to have seized the place as his own, the merry sound of children's voices is not heard there, old people chiefly occupy the crazy dwellings, and the natural decay of old age threatens soon to bring houses and occupants alike to an end.

A veritable human hive, teeming with young life, multiplying in such numbers that one naturally wonders when the inmates will "swarm" and settle in some new home, next comes under attention in a large tenement house on the Ropewalk, taken on our way to Redcross street. It is a remarkable contrast to the moribund court just described. Here nearly all the rooms are full; there is young life in abundance, but it is so melancholy and compressed for want of room to breathe freely that the place is almost as quiet and joyless as the court of old houses and old people we have just left. The rooms are full of children, whose buoyant spirits seem never to have had free play. The merry shout of mingled voices, such as one might hear any day in passing Muller's Orphanage, would be a surprise in this home of many children. The house comes under the regulations of "houses let in lodgings or occupied by

more than one family," and is therefore inspected and whitelimed, and ceilings and stair walls are in a fair condition; and well this is so, for 28 people live there. A staircase leads to four moderate size rooms on the first floor. In the first live and sleep a quay labourer, his wife, and five children, three under five years and the eldest eight years; husband earns 3s. 6d. to 4s. a day when in full work, and though his employment is irregular the children "manage to get a bit somehow or other;" and two beds and two pictures give sufficient semblance of a home to suggest what might possibly be done in a promising case for a three-roomed cheap dwelling. Next room—husband, wife, and six children under 10 years of age, three of whom go to school; family been living here four years, never had any sickness; furniture, one bed, two chairs, table, and a form; third room (same floor)—husband, wife and four children; fourth room, husband and wife only. On the upper floor the three rooms are much smaller, and are occupied by a husband, wife, and three children. This possession of three rooms, indifferent as they are, and one used as a back yard, at once makes a difference. There is more animation in the children, the domestic cat is to be found on the floor, and the wife herself is full of spirits and playful banter about her "extra room" for visitors, and the efforts of her old man to make the walls tidy by covering them with papers, showing sample patterns of many seasons and rivaling Joseph's coat for their many colours. The contrast between the fashionably designed papers and the grimy parts of the wall not yet covered was striking. Most of the people here seemed to be earning fair wages, and despite the one bed, the damp clothes hung from a line near the ceiling and the peculiar smell of vitiated air from causes we have already described, sighs were not altogether absent of an effort to "make the place a bit tidy," and on either side of the mantelpiece of one room in which seven people lived and slept were coloured pictures of "Gladstone" and "Garibaldi," suggesting that one must go even to a lower stage than that of a man with his wife and five children living in one room to find "poor men's politics" altogether unknown. But our description of this "dwelling of the poor" would hardly be complete if we failed to speak of the dull, dreary, dead monotony of the life led in these one-room tenements—overcrowded with children and under-furnished with any of the decent necessities of existence. The shadow of care which has settled down on them seems unbroken by any play of social sunshine, and there is little or no room for the sweet, subtle, tender influences of "home" in a life the surroundings of

which are on so low a scale. Thanks to modern legislation, the arm of the School Board is stretched out to snatch the elder children away for a few hours from this pent-up life in a crowded room, and even the restraint of school must be a welcome relief to such a "home." We have heard practical philanthropists admit that where weekly earnings are very low and children numerous in family, it is at present almost a necessity for the family to live in one room owing to inability to pay more than 1s. 6d. to 2s. per week on "housing;" and one of the latest suggestions locally in this way is to build houses with a limited number of lofty, well ventilated rooms, each to be let out to a family at a rent which shall include the use of a kitchen and large range for cooking, and a backyard or playground in common. It is thought that this might be done for 1s. 6d. to 1s. 9d. per room, though in London rooms in the houses of the Metropolitan Association for Improving Dwellings of the Industrious Classes (a commercial company now paying five per cent.), are let at 2s. 6d. to 3s. per week for one room and scullery; in the Baroness Burdett-Coutts's Model Lodging houses, Columbia square, with playground, laundry, and soup kitchen, the rent is 2s. 6d. for single room; and in Sir Sydney Waterlow's Improved Dwellings Company the rents are stated to average 2s. per room. It seems regrettable to be driven to the conclusion that the housing of families in single rooms is a necessity of the very poor, because if you commence with restrictions as to the number and ages of children, the worst cases—those who by these restrictions would be refused admission to the buildings specially designed to supply clean, well-lighted, and ventilated rooms with some of the conveniences and comforts for a family—would be driven back into the dulness, the dreariness, and the dirt of the black slums, where they would probably be packed tighter than ever. And until something can be done to prevent a man, wife, and six children, of all ages, herding together and sleeping in one bed, our "moral uprising," if weighed in the balance, will be found sadly wanting.

Of a different class altogether are the two and three-roomed houses, of which we have next to speak, in the group of courts in Redcross street—one of the areas which some of the Bristol guardians memorialised the Medical Officer of Health to condemn some six years ago on the score of the low state of health of the inhabitants and large extent of sickness attributed by the memorialists to the closeness and bad arrangement and condition of the houses and to sanitary defects. At that time there were in the five courts 104 houses, with an estimated population of

400, chiefly the families of labourers not in regular employment—hawkers, showmen, drovers, stick choppers, and (with a few notable exceptions) people of a nomadic habit, living from hand to mouth. Mr. Davies, while admitting that the houses were capable of certain structural improvements, differed from the memorialists in their deductions from the health statistics, and came to the conclusion that he was not in possession of evidence that would justify him in reporting this as an unhealthy area within the meaning of the Artisans' Dwelling Act. While excluding from his remarks some families of respectable working people whose houses and persons were scrupulously clean, he added, "If the removal of these courts would cure the moral evils which press so heavily upon the inhabitants, I for one would rejoice at such a course; but past experience has taught me that simply driving out the inhabitants would only concentrate them and produce possibly greater evil in another quarter." We have thus noticed this matter briefly, without entering into the merits of the argument, which would be entirely apart from our present purpose, especially as the circumstances have now considerably altered. The new street being constructed from opposite St. Matthias on the Weir to St. Jude's has brought down some of the houses, and with them an end wall letting in more daylight and giving much needed ventilation to courts only eleven feet wide. In the meantime many of the houses have worked out their own condemnation. Some of them have fallen into decay and are unoccupied; and the smashed windows probably gave them more sweetness and ventilation in their decay than they ever had before. In one court every house on one side is closed, and if you ask the neighbours the reason they will tell you, "It is all because a child died in a fit in one of them and there was a coroner's inquest." But the Sanitary Authority called upon the owners to put the houses in repair, and, the call not having been responded to, they are closed. Some of these courts, once the centre of disease, are gradually reaching a stage at which something in the way of a public improvement should certainly be done with them, abutting, as they will shortly, on a new thoroughfare; and a good opportunity is offered here for an open space for the hundreds of children in the neighbourhood. Still there are many "homes of the poor" there, and of which we have now to speak. They are essentially different to the tenement houses of one family in a room; and again we notice—however wretched the neighbourhood—the marked difference for the better directly the one-room limit is overstepped. The

air, too, is not so fetid, and the scenes are not so depressing, but the primary conditions of morality and decency are often wanting: the crowding of a whole family in one small bedroom must be deplorable, and the desolation of some of the homes where everything has been parted with for food is quite sufficient to account for the sullen misery into which some seem to have settled down. The rent varies from 2s. 6d. a week for two-roomed houses to 2s. 9d. or 3s. for three rooms, all of them very small. One house, with two rooms up and one down, is occupied by a labourer, his wife, and five children. The eldest boy, 15 years, sells newspapers, and it is well that he thus helps the weekly income, as the father had only earned 1s. up to Friday morning, and 2s. 9d. had to be paid for the week's rent. The youngest child, a baby a few months old, was on a pillow bed on two chairs by the fire when we visited the place, and in this small sitting room, about nine feet square, was the only closet for the house—in a cupboard within a couple of yards of the hearth. There was an air of tidiness and cleanliness about the house, the wife was a most industrious woman, and, in addition to attention to the household, she washed for her neighbours. We learnt that there are other houses there where the closets are similarly situated in the sitting-rooms; in other instances they are in blocks at the ends of the courts or outside the front doors, and in one court they are constructed in the frontages, the doors of the closets alternating with the entrance doors of the several dwellings. The "street doors" open directly into the living room, and where the house is crowded both sitting rooms and upstairs rooms are used for sleeping, though amongst the kitchen requisites and such sitting-room furniture as can be procured there is little space for the bedstead, especially as all stick chopping (for sale as firewood) has now to be done inside the door and not in the court as formerly. In one court some of the rooms directly off the flags are two feet below the level, and blank and miserable looking are some of these dwellings, for which the rent is 2s. 6d. a week. A few notes from our book may here prove of interest as to some of these:—

Three-roomed house—Labourer, wife, and four children, eldest boy 13 years; rent, 2s. 6d. per week husband has not had full work for five years; children two or three mornings a week sent to school without food—bound to go. Three-roomed house—Man and wife occupy top rooms; use lower room as fowl-house, cleaned out once a week. Two-roomed house—Woman of 70, daughter, and baby; the women earn sometimes 5s. per week stick-chopping; pay 2s. 6d. per week rent; elder woman put her shoulder out, and has had temporary parish relief; house nearly bare of furniture, has been sold for food, but pet bird in cage still kept. Now for two or three brighter cases:—Two-roomed house—Labourer in constant work, wife, and three children; rent, 2s. 6d. per week; lived here seven years and in the same court 15 years; walls of sitting-room hung with pictures, and house a model of comfort and cleanliness for such a locality. Another court better kept than former one—Labourer, in full work, and wife; pay 2s. 6d. per week; have lived here 20 years; never had any illness; have brought up nine children, all now grown up and gone away; husband belongs to a friendly society; house a picture of cleanliness and comfort. Most of the houses in this court are in better condition, and one old lady in the best house of the lot has lived here 25 years, has brought up twelve children, and has now 27 grandchildren. In another case the occupant had lived in the court 18 years, and in instances where the bread winner was in full work the tone of the home was as a rule far above that of those less fortunate. But these instances quoted were the exception to the rule till we come to York place, the last court, where each house has an open space and a bit of garden in front, and here again the light and air, open space and garden, were followed by pattern homes of cleanliness and apparent comfort for wage earning men. But the special facts to be noticed in the courts and alleys from Bridewell street to Redcross street are of a very decisive and well marked character—the more light and air the less dirt—the more room the less squalor and misery.



CHAPTER III.

CELLS ABOVE GROUND IN ST. JUDE'S.

THE district of St. Jude's, with its thickly clustering old houses and foul rookeries, its dank courts and blind alleys, its "dark entries" and back-yard shed dwellings, common lodging houses and tramps' retreats, its thieves' haunts and prize fighters' quarters, long enjoyed an unenviable reputation as the abode of the utmost squalor and misery, abject poverty, personal improvidence, and social wrong. It has been better of late years. Bull Paunch lane, the home of the dog fanciers, the prize fighters and their trainers, cag-mag butchers and loafers, has disappeared before the march of street improvements, and the broad new thoroughfare of Lawford street has swept away many a vile rookery and den of filth, and let in a wholesome current of air into streets, in passing through which one was glad to hold his breath or keep a handkerchief to his mouth to escape the noxious fumes of vitiated air issuing from every court and alley and passage. Mission work, and night schools for men and boys, old women and young girls, a *crèche* for infants, and other philanthropic enterprises of benevolent persons who have visited the struggling poor in their own dwellings have done something to redeem the place from the character which it once bore, and statistics show that although there is still much to be deplored in the shape of neglected homes, ill-treatment of wives, and selfish indifference to the welfare of children, there has been a decided diminution of crime compared with that which the neighbourhood was accredited with in times past. Eighteen years ago it must have contributed a large contingent to the extraordinary assemblage held one night in Major Tireman's Chapel, St. Philip's, when the Society of Friends' Mission gave a "Thieves' Tea," at which between 300 and 400 accredited thieves and their associates were present, the police having been won over by the Quakers to give their promise not to enter Unity street till the curious gathering had moved off. All night orgies, which often preceded the morning prize fights, have disappeared with the

suppression of these practical illustrations of the "noble art" and the restriction of the hours of closing publichouses. The more respectable publicans must have suffered from these night revels, if it is true that one licensed "King of Victuallers," who has since retired with a fortune, frequently took over the bar counter £6 or £7 in the small hours of the morning on these occasions. In this very district some twenty years ago we once saw one of these orgies in full swing. In the bar and outer rooms "the fancy" were assembled in force, and the motley crew of idlers, loafers, and men and youths of no settled occupation drank and talked and hotly debated the merits of the two champions, their height and weight, and condition, many of them sitting up till the hour of starting for the fight, others dropping off into a couple of hours' sleep, while early in the evening a select few could have seen in a back room one of the combatants "just trying his muscles," to see if they were lithe and supple and thoroughly fit for the battle. For this purpose a sack stuffed with shavings or rags was hung by hooks to the ceiling, and for a time the "bruiser," carefully gloved, let out right and left at the "dummy" as vigorously as though he had his antagonist before him. Dwellers in the district confidently assert that, taking all the philanthropic efforts together, nothing has so much tended to lessen the savagery and brutality which formerly prevailed as the reasonable restriction of the hours of opening of the lowest class of taverns. There has also been some little diminution of overcrowding, but the "dwellings of the poor" have undergone comparatively little change. In 1874, when Mr. Mark Whitwill laid the foundation stone of the British Workman in connection with the New Street Mission there, several houses had to be pulled down for the new building. In getting rid of the tenants there were turned out of one small room a man and wife and four children, and fourteen fowls found beneath the bed, where the accumulated filth

and feculent matter were more than a foot deep. In another room there lived an old man and woman, who slept on sacks in two of the corners, and in a third these costermongers kept their donkey; while to the top room, the roof of which was in some places open to the sky, an old blind man nightly made his way to sleep on the bare boards. We have improved a little on this, but as we shall now show the advance has been anything but great; and in this district—notwithstanding all the favouring circumstances which we have detailed in our first two articles—in dealing with the dwellings of the poor and the amelioration of the sad condition of the inmates scarcely more than the “fringe” of the work has been touched, either by philanthropic, religious, or sanitary agencies. During the past week in our visits to the “homes of the poor” in St Jude’s, we have seen a fearful amount of suffering, pain, and penury, and become acquainted with more heart-rending scenes of misery and woe and wretchedness than we have ever witnessed during many visits to the police-courts, gaols, and workhouses. We have visited homes which were described to us as “shed-dwellings”—old sheds and outbuildings plastered over, and they fully bore out the description; other one-roomed hovels, dark, and grimy with filth, with humid floor and clammy walls, were nothing better than ‘cells above ground.’ We have witnessed the severest struggles to earn the scantiest pittance, children half-naked, eager to drink milk or devour bread, and one family of a mother and two children were lying naked in bed all day in a room, the shutters of which had not been once opened that day to admit a ray of the bright daylight to this dark abode of silent misery. We have penetrated gloomy entries down narrow passages—where even in summer no sun ever comes—to find them the only means of access to rookeries where each room was occupied by a poverty-stricken family, some so shrouded in gloom from murky walls thick with accumulated dirt that truly the paper-patched windows “but dimly showed the state in which they lay.” In these tenement dwellings, untouched yet by the arm of authority, we have wedged our way up narrow rickety staircases, so bent by age and hollowed and kneed and angled into fantastic shapes and treacherous shakiness that they have been patched above and propped and crutched beneath with layer upon layer of timber, showing varying periods of “renovation.” But these could be only seen when some opened door cast a friendly ray of light on them to enable us to descend. The ascent was made by clinging to the slimy walls in a darkness that could literally be “felt,” for the air—thick with the mephitic exhalations from

filth-encrusted plaster—was so foul that it oppressed one at every step, and we have breathed more freely a mile down a coal mine and felt less discomfort in the Severn Tunnel half way under the river before the electric light illumined the works. The house to house visitation of the two sanitary inspectors, who now divide the whole city between them, has certainly not yet reached these dirt-mantled dens. In 1871 the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses put the common seal of the city to regulations empowering them to deal with “houses and parts of houses let in lodgings or occupied by more than one family,” to require their registration and inspection, and to enforce under penalties the cleansing and ventilation of the common passages and stairs and to cause these and the floors of all rooms, yards, areas and cellars to be kept clean. Here is a district in which these regulations require to be fully applied, and the responsibilities of owners of property enforced. The entrance to one of these dwellings in New street is by a staircase leading from a scullery called the “kitchen,” the floor of which was filthy with stagnant water, vegetable refuse and ashes, and the apartments above were let off in single rooms, one being occupied by husband, wife, and five children, with one bed, and even these people sadly complained of the state of the “kitchen.” The area of the whole city is evidently too large to be covered by two officers. They can deal with courts more readily, but these tenement houses wherever they are met with are the black spots of a neighbourhood. A writer in a London newspaper last week propounded a plan for the construction of large communal dwellings for the very poor, each building to accommodate 1300 people, but so far as we have seen this herding the population in one building would be a fatal mistake, which hardly comes within the range of practical remedies. Decent women with children who have once emancipated themselves from these tenement houses and obtained a two-roomed cottage, however poor and lowly, shudder at the thought of giving up their little home, open to the daylight and the pure air, for one of these close, pent-up, unventilated single rooms. Most of the latter in this district are in New street, Wade street, Great Ann street, Pinnell street, and Brick street. Compared with these Great George street is locally an aristocratic quarter, whose inhabitants consider they are falling in the social scale if they are by any means driven into some of the adjoining streets. In Great George street there is a greater proportion of people in regular employment—a potent lever which at once can lift most families above the bitter misery of their fellows, and naturally should result in an improved condition of the home. We have pur-

posely put it potentially, for we are assured by those daily visiting the houses in the district that in too many cases the bread winner considers that he has done his duty well indeed when he has given his wife less than half his earnings with which to provide all the necessities of the home, including food for himself, and if she wants more the poor woman has to go out herself and earn it. Here is an instance. The wife of a navvy, in full work, earning exceptional wages, boasts to us with a bitter tone of triumph, that though she is left to do most all for her seven children so far as money is concerned, she has "the largest house in her court," and has two bedrooms. She is perhaps an inch above the average height, forty-five years of age, rough of tongue, lithe and active, but with no physique indicating great strength, and there is latent humour lurking beneath her hard-worn features. But striding about the court amidst a recent purchase of hoarding and firewood, she is "limbing" the timber piecemeal with almost a giant strength. As she is talking to us she loses not a minute of the daylight; she seizes a piece of rough slab, ten feet long, places it across her knee and snaps it in two as easily as though it were a brittle clay pipe. Her elder children, home from the Board School in the dinner hour, are busy inside chopping the smaller pieces, and little ones, down to four and five-year-olds, are seated on the ground packing the sticks into bundles to be taken for the market. "I do my duty to my children," she exclaims, "and if every mother looked after her children as I do, they'd never hurt." The number of "working women" and "working" children in most of these homes of the poor astonish the visitor beyond measure. In many cases the women and children do more work than the man, especially when he is given to drink, and in numerous instances women entirely support the family when the husband is out of work. The case just quoted is one of comparative comfort, and the very embodiment of industrious, active, vigorous life. Here is its counterpart, in a pitiable picture of a home in one of three cottages in a court between West street and St. Jude's. The husband is a labourer at one of the largest works in the city, has been ill, but is now in full work at 16s. 6d. per week. He has a wife and five children; the wife a tailoress, and the only article of furniture left in the living room is her sewing machine. She has been confined only six weeks ago, and is stated to be out looking for work. The cottage has two rooms, rent 2s. per week. Nearly every window pane is smashed in, and partially protected with rags and paper; the front door has been battered in, and the panels falling out let the

draught direct into the living room, on the filthy floor of which, on some dirty rags, in a three-inch-deep soap-packing box, is the tiny baby six weeks old; there is a little fire in the grate, and the children, with scarcely enough rags to cover their nakedness are as black as the floor and walls. They are in charge of an elder girl. What the bedroom can be like for this family of seven it is not difficult to guess. In a two-roomed house we have not seen another instance of such wretchedness, rags, and squalor—the children, one of whom was a boy, nine years old, with nothing whatever to do; and the only bit of brightness in this home of gloom was that fresh-looking baby face, "Sweet as a primrose peeping 'neath the thorn." The two adjoining cottages, each occupied by labourers and their families of children, are pictures of comfort. One labourer on the Quay earned about 18s. a week, but has little work in the summer. Yet the house is full of furniture, the walls covered with pictures, and the four children clean and tidy. Two and sixpence per week is paid for the two rooms, and the occupants have lined the outside and papered the inside themselves; and have a good fowls' house well stocked opposite the door. The secret of all this comfort is unflagging industry. The wives of the two men join in a little mercantile enterprise of a curious kind. They buy American flour bags at large flour mills at the rate of 2s. 3d. a dozen, and clean and sell them at 2½d. each, to be made into under linen and sheets. They thus gain 3d. per dozen, but they also make them into articles of clothing for themselves and sell them, and we were shown sheets and pillow cases made of this material looking as good as new, and proud enough were these industrious women to show us the result of their work.

In a large portion of St. Jude's, however, the luxury of "constant occupation without care" is entirely unknown, and here the miserable homes are to be found, with children of shrunken features and stunted growth, dull eyes and languid limbs, and "cheeks deserted of their bloom." Climbing one of the dark, unventilated staircases we have described in a court off Little Ann Street, in a tenement house we find occupying a top room a man, wife, and four children, eldest 13 years, youngest 16 months. The husband supports the family by making butcher's skewers, and he has to make a thousand small skewers for fifteen pence, out of which he finds the wood! Most of the rooms off the filthy staircase are occupied by families. Some of them only have a few rags on the floor for beds, and are almost bare of any furniture; but one man and wife and five children possess two small rooms, 10ft. by 7ft., for which they pay 1s. 9d. per week; the man, a quay labourer, is often out of

employ, but there is some effort to keep the room clean. Entering the white-limed passage of a house in an adjoining street we pass through to the back and beyond a boiler house, a stable-looking room, supplied with an apology for a bed, a bench for a table, two old chairs, some cracked crockery, and a greasy "Merry Christmas" inscription on the wall, is let, as "furnished," at 2s. 6d. per week. A comparatively young man who has been a soldier, and is now in consumption, occupies the room with a young wife and three children, and earns a precarious living by making rudely carved picture frames when he is able to sit up. The place is miserable; the hedding black with accumulated dust and dirt. But this is not so bad as a furnished room in a lane at 3s. a week, occupied by a labourer and wife and three children. The man's wages are 18s. per week, but he does not get full work. His wife goes out washing, and leaves the elder boy of seven to mind the other children, and the sorrow, sickly faces of the younger children, the squalor of the "home," and the close and noisome smell of clothes and linen, never changed nor washed, and walls coated with years of dust and grime, tell the well known tale of hopeless misery. The only chance of the children surviving the baneful surroundings of such a home is to attain the school age, and be forced to leave the place for some hours every day. Both the younger children are ill. The little girl of three, with blanched and flaccid face, and the elder boy are crouching on either side of the fender like an old couple in their second childhood. The boy of five, in bed with his clothes on, has a bad cough, and his form is so attenuated that he seems scarcely able to rise. His eyes glisten, however, at the prospect of some milk which is sent for, and, drinking it with eagerness, he revives so much that he struggles out of bed, and moves with stilted, jerky action about the room, for his limbs seem too shrunken for the little fellow to trust himself to bend his knees, and so pitiable is the sight that the kind lady accompanying us offers to take both the younger children into a *crèche* for three weeks. The mother, who has arrived, and says she gave them her own dinner and went without any herself, gladly accepts the offer, and next morning we find them removed. The reader must take these as types of numerous cases we have on our note-book; but we will climb one more rickety staircase, grimy, dirt-mantled, and dark, in a court off Pinnell street, where room after room is occupied by families. No ray of light finds its way there, and as you touch the greasy, clammy walls to keep your footing on the crazy steps the coating of filth sticks to your fingers. A lady so devoted to this true "mission work" that

she has come from Clifton to live close to the scene of her labours amongst the outcast poor tells us as we ascend that she finds it necessary to wash her hands after one of these climbs, unless she takes a special pair of gloves for the occasion. Our visit is to a top room, in which a cattle drover, with his wife and five children, ranging in ages from nine months to fourteen years, live and sleep, and for which they pay 1s. 6d. per week. The county restrictions on the removal of cattle have thrown the man out of work, and the family depend on the earnings of the elder children and the mother, who carries things in the market, and earns a few coppers a day. The place is a dungeon-like room, with small window in one corner close to the roof. The walls are thick with dirt; nothing would ever get the grime out of the old flooring; the place is bare of furniture, with the exception of one bedstead, with its meagre bedding, black with the coatings of dirt of many years. The baby in arms and the two young children next in age are home with the mother, but when she is at work "little Joe," three years and a half old, minds the baby and his sister. The redeeming points in this dingy home are the active work of the School Board agent and the fact that the children appear well fed; but the clothes they wear are like the bed, begrimed with dirt so thick that all traces of the original colour or texture of the material have long disappeared.

The "home" just described, though at the top of a house, reminded one forcibly of a cellar, but we can find "cells above ground" without risking one's neck in tenement-house staircases, so dark and tunnel-like that our guide of one day declined to take us through one of them, as he was dubious about finding his way out again. The first of these coming under notice is in a wretched court, with 4ft. of gangway, off New street, in a poor shanty, for which one shilling per week is paid. Here we found an old woman of nearly three score and ten, her daughter, and baby. The place is 10ft. by 6ft., and is occupied by the old woman, who has her sack bed on an iron bedstead in the corner. There is no other furniture. The old woman suffers from rheumatism, and no wonder, for the walls are damp and the floor so wet that the two women, while nursing the baby and stick-chopping, use pieces of basket work as mats on which to sit. The old lady says she "must move," as the guardians will not give her relief in such a "home." Beyond this are other dwellings a little better, and for which two shillings per week is charged; but the drainage is bad, and the ashes and refuse in front were piled up four feet high. In front of this court, in one old woman's room, with broken floor and windows, the latter stopped up with rags, the only furniture consisted of

a kettle, a pint cup, a ginger beer bottle, and a sack in the corner. Another "dwelling-room," towards Great George street, is about 7ft. square, damp and dark, and the door padlocked. That house would have been worth inspection had we permission to look over it. In one court of single-roomed "shanties" with stable doors, padlocked, the houses are let at 2s. 6d. per week for women in their confinement; and wretched cells they are. Looking into one occupied by a man, wife, and two children, we find the floor damp enough. Not far from these was the case we have already mentioned of a poor woman, with her two children, aged ten and three years respectively, lying naked in bed all day in the darkness, the shutters which did duty for a blind not having been taken down. The woman gained her living by making and selling gaily-coloured toy balloons from bladders, and paid two shillings per week for the rooms; but illness, through exposure to the wet and cold, has overtaken her, and unable to get up to light the fire she has "kept the children in bed for warmth." The room, the bedding, and everything in the dreary place are in a deplorable state, and till our companion opened the door the room was in total darkness. The children look up as though wondering when the long night will end. The younger one has a string of beads on her neck, and looks wistfully at the empty grate. They had some food in the morning: the relieving officer already has the case in hand, and the doctor is to visit them. Here is a court of four-roomed houses, where the landlord has been called upon to lime the walls, and the outside looks well enough, but entering one of the houses occupied by a family of stick choppers, a husband, wife, and four children, we find the place in worse condition than the meanest stable. The dirt-encrusted plaster is falling from the walls, from which the water is exuding; the ceilings are falling through, and in one of the top rooms

there is a hole as big as a bucket in the plastering open to the insecure roof. Only two rooms are habitable, the living room with uneven brick floor, and the one sleeping room for the six inmates; and 2s. 9d. per week is the rent. In a back yard of one-floor houses—sheds plastered over—the two rooms, 8ft by 7ft., are let at 2s. 2d. per week. One of these "dwellings of the poor" is occupied by a labourer, his wife, and four children, and the poor woman, suffering from a severe attack of bronchitis, complained bitterly of the cold rooms, though so far as she can do anything with them they wear an appearance of cleanliness. A court 10ft. wide, with clothes hung to dry from house to house, is flanked by two-roomed dwellings, and in one small bedroom, 10ft. or 11ft square, husband, wife, and six children sleep. In another court of two-roomed houses, each room 10ft. by 6ft. or 8ft., the closet is in the living room in every house except one. A widow occupying one of these houses has lived there 22 years; and another of these poor men's dwellings is tenanted by a labourer, his wife, and five children. For a single room at the bottom of a yard in Brick street one old man suffering from rheumatism pays 2s. per week. We have taken these cases for brevity, perhaps too barely, from our rough notes; but they tell their own tale. We lighted upon many a strange scene in the lives of the outcast poor; close to the border line of the criminal class. A thief's home which we visited would be well worth photographing, but it is hardly within the scope of our present work. We have, however, so many instances of appalling poverty to deal with in this district, and the amount of child misery is so great and the illustrations of it so striking and forcible, that we must reserve further description, with some interesting notes of the extraordinary work done by women and children, for another chapter.



CHAPTER IV.

WORKING WOMEN IN ST. JUDE'S.

THE more one lifts the dark veil which screens from ordinary observation the gloomy social life of St. Jude's, and the more one sees of the loathsome and unlovely grimness of the wretched homes of the poor, the deeper he is impressed with the apathy, the indifference, and the utter lack of energy characterising too many of those who should be the bread winners of the family. A "Working-man," who, after reading our articles on St. Jude's, wrote a letter to the Editor of the *Mercury and Post* was quite right in expressing his disbelief in indiscriminate almsgiving. He also wins sympathy when he says "Find the poor work, provide them better habitations, encourage habits of thrift and sobriety, and educate them;" but when he hopes that the publicity now being given will "rouse the people to clamour for their rights, and our opulent classes to do all they can to uproot the upas tree, &c.," it would be as well perhaps to remind him of this apathy and want of self-reliance, self-respect, and tender regard for their wives and little ones, so remarkable amongst many of the heads of families in the district under notice. So much is this the case that in many hundreds of cases—in fact with very few exceptions in the more wretched of the homes—we find that the women of the family—the wives and mothers "go out to work;" and in numerous instances these working women in St. Jude's do actually more than the men to provide for the home, the husband, and the family. This too often is the case, not from a lack of earning power on the part of the husband, but from the bare pittance he thinks it right—out of what he does earn—to give to her who, so far as domestic happiness is concerned, should be to him "all that soothes the life of man, his high endeavour, and his glad success." A married woman often works at a factory, or toils in the streets selling things from door to door, when her time and care should be given to her home. But for this army of working women whole families would at once be

swept into the workhouse. Here is an instance. A benevolent lady draws our attention to a grimy home in a court, in which a labourer and his wife and seven children have one bedroom. The man strong and able does little work. His wife for years has chiefly maintained the family by working as a tailoress at an establishment in the city. She has done so down to the very hour of her confinement, and when that occurs the earning power of the family is gone; their domestic "ways and means" at once collapse. They are dependent upon outside assistance, and the husband himself goes to the relieving-officer for the special relief allowed to poor women at such a time. Private charity and public relief from the ratepayers keep that family till the wife who is here the breadwinner, can get strong again, and the officers state that they have scarcely known the man do any work for years. We are assured of very many cases in which wives are obliged to feel satisfied, and many consider themselves fortunate if they receive from their husbands one shilling out of their earnings of three or four shillings in one day, and they eke out the rest of the money required for the rent and food for husband and family by their own labour. This shall be illustrated by one of the most appalling cases of destitution and abject misery in a home which we visited last week, and where brutality was added to privation. The husband is in "full work" as a labourer, with 18s. to £1 per week, at a large manufactory. He has a wife and six little children. We grope our way up a rickety staircase of a tenement house to this "home in one room" for eight human beings. The room is about 10 feet square, bare of furniture except a bed, an earthenware pan for mixing whitening balls, a stool, a chair and three or four drinking cups. It has a forlorn look indeed, but nothing in that bare and cheerless home approaches in squalor and blank despair the sad picture of suffering humanity which confronts us in the gaunt,

shadowy figure of the wife, who with scanty and ragged garments, hollow cheeks, and "hunger in her eye," holds a baby to her breast. She is bedaubed with whitening with which she had been doing her "day's work"—mixing whitening in a pan, forming it into balls, baking them over the cinder fire, and giving them to the children to sell in the streets to "get a bit of bread." A more terrible picture of despair and want we have not seen in St. Jude's. The husband is a strong, well-fed man; the woman—a perfect wreck, over whom there appeared to hover a shadowy dread of this "breadwinner"—implored a patriarchal Scripture reader and good Samaritan to "come and see her often," as though she felt a protection in his visits. That home seemed placed under a curse, and a tramps' kitchen with its huge blazing fire, well sanded floor, and bright array of tin baking pans, in which the vagrants cook mysterious dishes of "unconsidered trifles," was a place of comfort and luxury compared with this workman's home. In one case, in Great Ann street, we enter a dark, tunnel-looking place in a passage, and have to feel along the filth-encrusted wall, untouched with lime or brush for years, till we reach a staircase. The fetid air, thick with malodorous exhalations, checks one for a moment, but pushing on we ascend through a rookery of single room tenements and come to a dismal room, ten feet square, with the walls so reeking with filth that the small window veiled in dirt only admits partial daylight. The place is occupied by a husband, wife, and three children, and the little ones are left here all day in the unwholesome living and sleeping room, while both parents are out, the mother being a worker. In two box-like rooms in a court live a labourer, his young wife, and three children. They only have to pay 1s. 6d. per week for the home, but the husband cannot even accomplish this unpaid, and his wife in addition to the domestic duties takes out chumps of wood for sale, and says she "never thought she should have to work so hard when she became a wife." The home is very bare, and the young mother says sorrowfully that "some mornings she hardly knows how they shall live." Here is a case of husband and wife and four children living in one room, in Great Ann street, at 1s. 9d. per week. The wife says her husband only succeeds in earning 4s. or 5s. a week, and she sold fish till one day, after parting with many of her household things, she had to sell her fish basket, and on the day we called she had not a loaf of bread in the house for the children, and no means of getting it. There are undoubtedly cases in which the casually employed labourer earns but a few shillings in one week—and where the

struggle to obtain the commonest food is most keen; but the next case on our list is that of a journeyman tailor, who could get full work and good wages, but with his wife and six children in a murky room, at 1s. 9d. per week, he left them in such squalor and misery, and so close to starvation, that they at last had to go to the Workhouse, and he is now doing a little work, without pay, in prison. A hawker in an adjoining room, taking a fancy to one of the children—a flax-haired little boy—undertook the charge of him, though he had a crippled wife, and he himself was almost too ill to work. We saw the tiny fellow perched in a high chair like a pet bird, pecking a crust, in the kind hawker's room—all his little companions in the workhouse. "Husbands should support their wives" would be a wholesome doctrine to teach to wage-earning men in some parts of St. Jude's. Force the landlords of these wretched houses to recognise their responsibilities and set their houses in order, cleanse and ventilate them and make them decent under the "regulations for tenement houses," but let the impressive words of Mr. Fawcett, at Reading last week, have their full weight—"Deeply as we may sympathise with the suffering that has been disclosed, I feel more strongly than I can express that all that is bad now will become intolerably worse if anything is done to weaken the great and sacred principle of self-reliance, or if anything is done to encourage men to believe that they have the right or the power to throw upon others the cost of maintaining either themselves or the children whom they are responsible for bringing into the world." Here is a strong case in proof that much can be done by self-effort—a case in which a man, the son of a manufacturer in a neighbouring county, after sinking with his wife and family into the very lowest state of abject misery and squalor through indolence and intemperance—living on charity and miserable dolcs for petty employment—was led to rouse himself from his life of sloth and beggary, and to throw off his sordid habits; and with a little effort he obtained a home and a position independent of all outside aid. He was found, with his wife and seven children, in rags and semi-starvation, in the top room of a lodging-house in this district. Both husband and wife drank, and when the visitor—a kind-hearted tradesman devoting his leisure time in the evenings to improving the sad condition of the outcast poor—discovered them, he found the poor woman so absolutely destitute of clothing that she could not venture outside their room. A dress was provided for her, the husband was begged to reform his habits, and at length, feeling that the pitiful

condition of his wife and little children was a disgrace to his manhood, he gave up his besetting temptation, exerted himself to do something more than loafing, begging, and doing little mean service for a shilling a day; and he is now holding a good situation, and has a cheerful home of his own, filled with a decently-clothed, happy family. We do not for a moment wish to imply that there are not many cases in which women are responsible for the sad condition of their homes; but with improved habits, better housing of the poor, more thoughtful consideration on the part of the husband when in work, the married woman would be far better and more economically employed in looking after her domestic duties and training the children at home than if she were earning a few pence by some precarious means out of doors, and leaving the children and home duties entirely neglected. We came in contact with many instances of widows and unmarried women "fighting the battle of life" under the hardest circumstances, and the self-reliance of some of these women, married and unmarried, is worthy of note. They engage in pipe-making, sack turning and darning—at 1s. 6d. for six dozen, finding thread and paying railway carriage (2d.)—stick-chopping, clothes washing, fancy mat making, and manufacturing whitening balls. One industrious working woman in St. Jude's succeeded in keeping a sick husband and four children for three years by fancy mat making; but this must have yielded better return than the wretched pittance for which many of the poor working women of St. Jude's toil from morning to night. We could give other instances, but we will introduce the reader to

THE ELFIN MATCH BOX MAKERS

The words are suggestive. They smack of some fanciful story of Wonderland, some Christmas tale or bright pantomime scene, where dapper elves work fun and mischief, and dainty fairies flit about with "motion airy as the dancing spray." But the Elfin match-box makers are of far sterner material than these fanciful creations that in the colours of the rainbow live "And play i' th' plighted clouds." They are to be found in the humblest homes of the poor, dressed in rags instead of gossamer folds, and struggling hard for dear life and daily bread—the dark shadows of their lives only broken now and then by a fitful play of sunshine and light. They are the victims of that keen competition for all descriptions of work that can be done by females. They make up the boxes for the Elfin matches at the rate of twopence a gross, binding them up in bundles of

three dozen, finding their own string and flour for pasting on the ornamental paper and the picture of an aerial sprite winging his way through the clouds. If a woman succeeds in making 20 gross a week she can only earn for these 2880 boxes 3s. 4d., and the boxes full of matches are sold at twopence per dozen, six boxes for one penny. Mr. Wilson, president of the Kent Street Ragged School, stated last week at a working men's meeting in Camberwell, that amongst the chief causes of poverty were "slackness of work, competition, and strong drink." Here appears to be at any rate a strong illustration of one of these elements of poverty amongst the struggling outcast poor. Our first visit to the Elfin match-box makers shall be in a court off a thoroughfare on the wall of which the intelligent visitor to this benighted neighbourhood is informed, "This is Wade street." Climbing up the lofty staircase of a tenement house we enter a room rented at 1s. 2d. per week by a labourer, his wife, and three children. The man has been out of work for a long time, and the wife, as usual in these cases, has to struggle to earn the bread for the family. The rough table and the floor-covered with hundreds of pieces of the slenderly-shaved wood used for the match boxes, show at once how she earns the money. She tells us she is able sometimes, "when her baby is good," to make three gross per day. She thus earns sixpence, but this is only achieved by the work of very many hours. But she is very industrious, and the room and single bed are clean compared with all the surrounding homes, and on the wall is a winter picture of a girl in a snowstorm. Here is another case, in Picnell's court. In a three-roomed house live a widow and two children, supporting themselves by the same class of work. It is a hard struggle, for the woman, who is fairly clad, says she has to pay 2s. 3d. per week for the house. She has emancipated herself from the tenement houses in Great Ann street, and though her living room is damp, and the court shut in from much chance of sunlight, she has got a little home together, and looking for a moment with pride at her few articles of furniture and her pictures on the wall, she says she fears she shall be obliged to return to the one room; and the poor creature shudders with terror at the thought of such a fate for her young girls, who evidently have had a motherly care in this lowly home. It is found that only the most industrious and the hardest working will join in the Elfin match-box competition for work. We will finish with one more instance, a case in which the dainty elf seems to have helped to give some little sweetness and light, and to have added something of cheery warmth to a lowly home. It is a one floor dwelling

amidst a series of courts off Great Ann street. It stands by itself, and forms a continuous room, but turned at a right angle, one side being used as a bedroom and the other as the living apartment. It is occupied by a labourer, in work, his wife and four children. The wife, recently confined, is very weak, and in a bed drawn near the fire, which is at the angle, thus sending a glow of warmth into both sides of the dwelling. She is attended by a motherly woman; the children are not only well looked after, and clean and tidy, but are bright-faced, cheerful, and happy; and to our surprise—for it is the first time we have encountered it in the forlorn homes we have visited in St. Jude's—they are "at play!" A bright-eyed, chubby-faced little one, seated on a stool by the fire, dividing her attention between hugging and kissing a rag doll and taking huge bites from a thick piece of bread and butter, proved a sight so novel and refreshing that with quiet enjoyment we stood watching this charming picture of "child happiness," till a companion, touching our elbow, asked if we had forgotten there were more places to visit. The soft, tender love and affection of home life had evidently found its way into this dwelling of the poor. Yet these people had a hard struggle to keep things going and make two ends meet. The secret lay in industry, economy, thrift, and sobriety. The wife when well ekes out the income of the husband by working at Elfin match-box making at twopence per gross; and the husband in his spare time has made a little greenhouse, in which he grows plants. Pictures are hung round the rooms, and a linnet in a cage looks as bright and lively as the children.

This, however, is only a flash of sunshine amidst the darkest clouds which overshadow too much of the social life of St. Jude's. Every visit we have paid to the neighbourhood has more deeply impressed us with the necessity of something being done to improve the squalid homes where human beings are herded together under circumstances so terrible that, placed side by side with them, many a thrilling story narrated by missionaries fresh from foreign lands pales away almost to insignificance. Children between three and four years of age, taken from these homes and placed in a *crèche*, have shocked the ladies and attendants there by uttering oaths and filthy expressions as their ordinary words in play. From their cradle—or rather the floor or box or chair of their infant nursing—in some homes they learn to lisp oaths and blasphemy in fun. Attempting a game of romps with the little innocents, one of these ladies assured us she was obliged to stop till she had checked the children's shocking expres-

sions, which were uttered immediately the little ones became excited and gave themselves to unrestrained play. Some came so covered with filth and vermin that before entering the general room each morning they had to be placed in a bath; and till the parents are taught cleanliness, one of the greatest difficulties is that of clothing these children while at the *crèche*. Only two or three weeks ago, one young girl, 18 years of age, was found so naked in one room of a rookery that clothes had to be obtained before she could be brought out. In some cases clothing is never changed for any purpose till it falls into rags and drops away, and has to be renewed. As the people appear in the day time so they sleep, herding together in a single bed or on the floor of a single room. We have been furnished with instances of immorality and social wrong-doing which would shock any foreign missionary. But we cannot detail these, and we will pass on to a sketch of

THE STICK CHOPPERS' HOME AT NIGHT.

The keen competition in every branch of industry in these days when people have so "multiplied on the face of the earth" that cities have been overcrowded, and there are thousands of fresh mouths to be filled every year, has deprived the stick choppers of much of their supply of wood. Sugar casks and packing cases from unloaded vessels are now in many instances eagerly caught up by the handicraftsman and turned into "gipsy tables," and "ebonised" and gilded, or covered with silk and plush and gay fringe they adorn the rooms of the well-to-do, instead of going on the fire. The stick chopper has consequently to seize his opportunity and get a supply when he can. Our visit is on an evening when an unusually large supply has just come to hand from an unloaded vessel, and the stick choppers are working far into the night, sawing and cleaving the wood, and preparing bundles for sale in the morning. We visit them between ten and eleven o'clock. In nearly every case the women are doing the work, but here is one industrious man sawing away at some heavy timber for his wife to chop in the morning. The room is only about 7 ft. square, and the lamp throws an uncertain light on the floor, which appears at first to be covered with nothing but splintered wood already chopped. But examination shows on one pile of sticks close to the fire grate what appears to be a bundle of dark rags. This proves to be two children lying in their clothes on their rude and uneven bed, and as sound asleep as though they were on a bed of down. In the next house there are a family of nine, and here they have two bedrooms. The husband is gone upstairs, but

most of the rest of the family are up, for it is a busy night. The floor of the living room is covered with wood which has fallen from the chopping block, seated on the ground before which is the eldest daughter, a brawny-limbed girl of 19. She is healthy looking, for she is frequently out in the open air. Her bared arms are as big and sinewy as a blacksmith's, for she is constantly cleaving wood, and in the cart, the shafts of which we have stumbled over in the dark outside the door, she could pull four or five cwt. of timber. She is dexterous at her work, for though the large basket is piled up with tied bundles, her younger sisters cannot keep pace with her as strip after strip of wood flies from the chopping block. The ruddy glare of the fire, aided by the red ochred walls, throws a cheery glow over the room, bringing into bold relief the figures of the anxious mother giving a parting look round as she is about to ascend the stairs, the eldest son stretched asleep temporarily "on the sticks," a younger girl binding up the bundles, and the other children grouped about the fire. All are comfortably clad, and look in good condition, and there is a healthy odour in the room from the resinous pine wood. In a rough way there is evidently some healthy home feeling in this dwelling of the poor, and the School Board will soon lend its elevating influence. There are some pictures on the walls, and the mother apologises for the untidiness of the place and the fact that "the other pictures are not put up" because the room has just been ochred out. The stick choppers are an industrious community. They work hard, and they not only have a certain clannish feeling amongst themselves, but they seem fond of their home. They are especially fond of pictures, as their walls testify, and we have seen the most incongruous admixture of flashy theatrical illustrations and chromo-lithographs ablaze with colour alongside the most elaborately embossed mourning tablets, representing many-pinnaced shrines of white marble on a black ground, capped with sweeping branches of cypress drooping over the name of some departed member of the family. In another house, in a room small but clean, with the scantiest furniture but tidy, a labouring man, young, fresh-looking, and washed, is reading a newspaper; and in only one other case in a night's round do we find any effort at reading. The second instance is in a most squalid home, where a comparatively young woman, seated by the fire, is reading a pamphlet of "The Converted Nun," while on a rag bed on the floor near the hearth are three children, whose covering must have had the accumulated dirt and grease of many years. In one small house a waterside porter

has had a good day, and supper is "to the fore"—bread and cheese and pickles, a herring, and tea. Knives and forks are at a discount, and, in fact, in many a house in St. Jude's cutlery would be considered a luxury, anything in the way of Chinese chopsticks a refinement, and fingers and an occasional use of a pocket knife are all that are required for a "high feast." But if the event were very special, such as a funeral or a wedding, and timely notice were given, a man might go so far as to stop in bed on the previous day while his wife washed his only shirt.

Among the remedial agencies that have come under our notice is the St. Jude's Church Society, started about a year ago on a most comprehensive scale by members and friends of the congregation of St. Mary's, Tyndall's Park. This society owes its origin to the single efforts of a benevolent lady, who, about two years ago, led by a little beggar boy to journey from Clifton to St. Jude's to see his home, became so interested in the terribly neglected condition of the homes of the poor that she obtained a residence near them, and has since devoted herself entirely to the work of aiding them to reform their homes, and habits, and lives. As her friends at St. Mary's became aware of the crying need of this poverty-stricken neighbourhood and the extended field of work there they consulted with the vicar of St. Mary's, the Rev. W. F. Bryant, and the Rev. T. W. Openshaw, also with the Rev. J. C. Kerry, of St. Jude's and started the St. Jude's Church Mission. A mere summary of the work they have done would fill a chapter. But we may briefly state that they have a day nursery, where some thirty infants of poor women who have to work are cared for; a men's night school in the National School, Wade street, where they teach men of all ages, from 20 to 60, to read, and they sometimes have as many as 86 present; a boys' night school, with nearly 50 attending, some of them ignorant of the alphabet; Bible classes for women, with 150 attending; a Bible class for men, with 54 on the books; young men's and women's classes on Sundays; a work club, employing 75 women in needlework, which is sold at a shop opened in the district; mothers' meetings; a working party of ladies to make clothes for the children and for distribution, and to receive contributions of clothes, sometimes wanted even to enable a man to go to his work. There are also district visitors, who go into the worst of the tenement houses. Ladies from Clifton and Redland are doing this practical work, medical men and others, after a day's professional work, attend and take the night classes, and all this work is now in the most active operation.

CHAPTER V.

WAIFS AND WANDERERS IN ST. JUDE'S.

IT is only by frequent visits at all hours of the day and late at night that one can attempt to probe to the bottom the hard-biting poverty, the deadly monotony of life, and the hopeless misery in which hundreds of human beings pass the winter months in St. Jude's. Even then there is necessarily much that one cannot see of this inner life of the poor, passed in dismal dens, many of them so reeking with filth and rotten with the rust of age that it is time they encumbered no longer the ground they render so noisome. In the day time the stairs leading to some of them are so enshrouded in gloom that after once leaving the daylight you feel your way at every step, and, compared with the throbbing life of the city streets, the thick darkness, and the sickening odour of the fetid air, are more suggestive of some subterranean passage leading to the vaults of the dead than a main approach to the "homes" of the living. At night you cannot enter these places without assistance, and you have to be led by the hand like a blind man, without knowing where you are, till a faint glimmer of light from some broken door or a piece of thick glass let in to the space left by a kicked-out panel gives you its friendly aid. What wonder is it that men and women brought by honest penury or their own improvidence to herd with their families in such homes become so hardened as to lose all traces of self-respect and even the outward semblance of modesty and decency, and sink into the lowest types of humanity, or that their children, born and bred in these loathsome dens, and steeped to the lips in misery from their cradle, become the waifs, the Arabs, and outcasts of society, and drift into the criminal class? The horrors of these nurseries of vice have hitherto formed only the sombre background to the pictures of distress and annual appeals for help presented on home missionary platforms before select audiences, and when dragged to the front on a more public stage and held up to the general gaze they prove so

startling that it is said the cases quoted must be isolated instances. On the contrary, we have overwhelming testimony from home missionaries, district nurses, and visitors, apart from our own observation, that the cases we have detailed are only typical of hundreds of others in St. Jude's. To quote only a few instances, a lady superintendent of nurses writes us:—"I have been a visitor amongst the poor here for fourteen years, and could tell very sad tales of poor women who have given birth to their infants on the bare floor (with other children in the room), the mother being totally destitute of covering for herself or child." Another says:—"While visiting a poor woman in her confinement in a filthy room in a tenement house in Gloucester lane, a bit of carpet was thrown over the mother while I was there, so destitute was she of clothes, and there were five children in the same room; husband was a smith, who could earn 32s a week, but drank. Another tells of a man living in a two-roomed house with two women, each of whom has children under six years of age. In one miserable room, lying on a rag bed, we found three children belonging to a comparatively young woman, whose husband had eloped with a young girl, with whom he had a second family. The wife, on finding him, took her children to him, leaving him the two families of children, while she returned to St. Jude's, formed another alliance, and has three more children in one of these hovels. It is hardly surprising that the birth-rate has reached 42 1. Then as to the extent of these tenement dwellings, we find that it is estimated by those who are visiting the houses almost daily that there are between 400 and 500 families living in single rooms in St. Jude's alone. These tenement houses abound in most of the streets we have noticed, and they are mostly decaying old dwellings, where in some instances rooms have been divided off to secure an extra "let." In one case a chapel has been thus served, and a

wretched picture of squalor and gloom was one of the "homes" thus penned off, and where the half-clad children, perched on the fender round the fire, looked as though the merry shout, the gleeful noise of youngsters at play, and the ringing laugh of childhood had never been heard in their home. In others, outbuildings and stables have been converted into "homes of the poor," and in one case a stall for horses was thus changed into a habitation for human beings, and the hay loft was similarly utilised. In times past this valuable property was mostly owned by persons at a distance, and a story is told of the regular appearance of one gentleman's carriage at the doors of three of these places when the owner came from Clifton to receive his "rents." But as the houses became dilapidated and the filth accumulated and the difficulty of enforcing payment of rents increased, these distant landlords have become less numerous, and many of the houses now belong to people who live in the neighbourhood, and who in their turn have become comparatively rich in trafficking in these sordid specimens of homes of the poor. In one house, including the stable at the back, we are assured there are eighteen families, and in another ten. We have seen some of these poor people come down from these dens to the street entrance to get a little "air," so difficult was it to breathe freely in the pent up rooms. Although we have for obvious reasons in a newspaper report purposely abstained from mentioning the names of persons or giving the actual number of any particular house spoken of, we found on a second visit that the white lime and ochre brush had already been at work in some of the places that we referred to. With regard to closets in living rooms, if anyone doubt their existence let him visit the neighbourhood of Swan court, St. Jude's. We hear that some working men contemplate holding a meeting on the subject in St. Philip's at the opening of the new year. Let them take care if they do so that the working of the affair does not get into the clutches of the sham working men, who never hit a stroke of work themselves but who live and fatten on all agitation having anything to do with their own class. The Sugar Bounty cry, Reciprocity, Fair Trade, Railway and Dock schemes, have served their turn; but these curious specimens of working men are "out of work" just now; they are sadly in want of a new agitation on which to thrive. But the vultures are sniffing the air; they have already "made a sign" afar off, and if they only scent subscriptions they will soon be here pouncing on what they look upon as their legitimate prey.

TOILING AND OUTCAST CHILDREN.

Child misery is one of the saddest and most pitiable features of the poverty-stricken homes in St. Jude's. In the crowded one-roomed dwellings we have described their infancy too often has known little of parental care and less of tender affection and attention to their little wants. They are often too hungry to think of play, and too miserable to have any share in the brightness and mirth and happiness usually associated with childhood. Their only chance lies in surviving the noisome atmosphere of their homes till they reach the school age, and then they get some daily change, unless they, unfortunately, have parents whose lives have become so degraded that, doing no work themselves, they partly, and sometimes entirely live on the earnings of their children. Their case is then almost hopeless, and especially amongst the movable population who often seek to baffle the efforts of the school board officer by shifting from house to house; and if followed up they will leave the city rather than forego the earnings of the children. Cases have come under our notice in which these people, who neither toil nor spin themselves, systematically live on their children. Here is an instance, in which a boy of nine years, dressed in grotesque costume as a negro minstrel, had his health undermined by being forced every day and night through the week to sing and dance at public houses for the support of a man and woman who "had brought him up." He had never been to school, and did not know who his parents were. With his face blackened he was taken sometimes to forty public houses a night by the man and woman, who waited outside to take the money which he got by singing. On an average he earned 3s. 6d. a night, and 5s. on Saturday nights. When he was seized by a School Board officer the woman claimed him, and said though he was not her boy she had "the feelings of a mother for him." The magistrates sent him to Park Row Industrial School, where it was found that he had been driven so hard in his nightly work for these vagabonds that his health gave way, and Mr. Mark Whitwill placed him for a time in the Children's Hospital, where he gradually recovered, and he is now in the Park Row School. Several of these cases have been dealt with by Mr. Bird, the School Board officer for the St. Jude's district. In one instance a mother, accompanied by a man, thus lived on the earnings of her boy of nine years, and when a detention order was obtained for the boy they left the city, and took the child with them. In another case the parents carried on a

similar system with their boy, 11 years of age, for twelve months, and they paid 2s. 3d. a week for a furnished room in Great Ann Street. The poor boy earned from 2s. 6d. to 3s. a night for them, and if he failed to get a certain sum he was sent to bed without anything to eat, while his inhuman keepers regaled themselves on the child's earnings, till at length the School Board officer, who had night after night been on their track, seized an opportunity and got a detention order for the boy to be sent to the Day Industrial School. The vagabonds, however, took the little fellow away, and left for a fresh field of "work." Most of the above cases are those of the nomadic population who travel about the country, and make St. Jude's their quarters while here. But there are others where little children "toil and spin" for parents who are permanent residents of the tenement houses and courts. Here is an instance in which a boy at a Board School was always absent on Thursdays. His parents have a regular means of living, but it was found that the child was sent to the Cattle Market every Thursday, and he sometimes was turned out at three o'clock in the morning, and occasionally the little fellow was up all night to meet the cattle boats, and if he did not earn a certain sum of money he got beaten with a strap. Here is a distressing case in Great Ann Street: father and four children, twelve, nine, five, and three years old, live in one room in a deplorable state; mother in a lunatic asylum; father, formerly a tradesman in business, spends his earnings in drink, and last week the children, half naked, were dependent on neighbours for food; eldest girl, twelve, had only a chemise to wear. A woman with a boy lives in a court off River Street with a man who has a little girl, and this pair daily took the children out singing till a kind lady, seeing the emaciated condition of the boy, paid for his food at the Day Industrial School for three months. In a horrible den in Brick street a man, woman, and three children (nine, five, and three years) sleep on a piece of sacking, black with filthy accretions, the room full of pestilential smells, the children in rags, and the girl of nine has only an old tattered frock to cover her. The parents and children pick up a living on ash heaps. Fortunately the School Board, amongst the other good work it is accomplishing amongst the poor, is exercising such wholesome vigilance over children that much of the cruelty formerly practised towards them to force them at a tender age to earn money is being abandoned. And with the excellent regulations recently formulated by the Watch Committee (of which Mr. W. K. Wait is chairman), adopted by the Council, and now sanctioned by the Home Secretary, all

children under eight years of age will be prohibited altogether from selling any article in the streets; and those under thirteen years will be prohibited from being employed after nine o'clock in the evening from April to October, and after eight o'clock in the evening from October to April. This will remove what has been for some years past a crying disgrace to the city—that of children of five and six years of age selling articles in the streets till 10 and 11 o'clock at night, often in the bleakest months of the year. On the books of the River Street Board School there are 320 children, 260 of whom are present during the week, and of these—the poorest class of children, some of these without shoes and stockings—the average attendance is 190. About one-half of this number are known to sell articles in the streets at night; and the School Board officer has had to remonstrate with the parents for beating children of tender age who have not earned the required amount of money in the streets. The dull, stupid boys attend with the most regularity, the smartest being often kept away for the purpose. An intelligent little fellow of ten has often been beaten with a strap because he has not, after many hours in the street at night, brought back sufficient results of his sales. Children have been found with shocking marks on their bodies of beatings from a huddled strap. It is gratifying to find that this ill-treatment is being suppressed. That the Corporation are justified in the action they have now taken in the matter will be apparent from the following sad story of

POOR MORRISSEY, THE STREET BOY.

Morrissey was between six and seven years of age when we first knew him. He could not tell when his last birthday was. They kept no birthdays at his home—a single room bare of furniture, and where his father, a labourer, his mother and four children lived and slept, with a few rags on the floor for a bed, a meat tin for a kettle, and an old soap box turned up for a table. A police officer who once visited it described it as a horrible place, where the stench was abominable. Morrissey was of stunted growth, and his pinched, scathed face and lack lustre eyes had the wearied and worn expression of old age rather than childhood. He was clothed in such rags that he was sometimes obliged to hold them together as he shuffled along. His father was given to drink, and the child was out all hours till midnight, winter and summer, selling matches and papers. His wan face and woe-begone look won sympathy, and he frequently managed to sell all his stock. If he did not

his child of six dared not go home till midnight. If you gave him money and asked him to go he would look terrified at the thought of home. He has been found in office passages in the city within half an hour of midnight hardly able to stand, and with scarcely sufficient strength left to beg anyone in wailing piteous accents to "help him out of the last few." Of a cold winter night after someone had bought up all his stock, and helped him to safely stow away his pence, he has been known to have his pockets so full of coppers that he had to hold them up as he shuffled wearily on his way to his wretched home. At length one bitterly cold night, shoeless little Morrissey, footsore and weary, was found at Clifton with his chilblained feet so swollen and bleeding that he could walk no farther. Even his companion "Arabs" looked with pity on this poor child, and some of them, forming a voluntary ambulance corps, carried him in turn down to the city, and as he would not go home — not having sold out his stock — they put him in a snug corner in a doorway in Nelson street. There he was found at half-past eleven o'clock at night by a kind constable, who hearing his feeble moaning cry, turned his bull's eye upon the frightened child. The officer humanely picked him up and carried him to the police station. He was taken before the magistrates for not being under proper guardianship, remanded for a week to the workhouse, and having recovered a little he was returned to his parents, who, knowing the little street merchant's value to them, promised to take the best care of him. There being no by-law in existence against children of tender age selling things in the streets at night, Morrissey soon resumed his "bread winning" for the family, and the following summer, after creeping down some steps to rest by the harbour, it turned out that the little fellow had "crept away to die," for that same night his body was afterwards found floating on the water; and poor Morrissey, the street boy, weary with the march of life, at its very first child stage, had found his last rest.

SQUALOR AND DESTITUTION.

In directing one's attention to the poor waifs of St. Jude's we only come in contact with scores of further illustrations of the squalor and wretchedness of the majority of the "homes" in this district. Some of the courts off New street are the worst—the most uncleanly and the most squalid. Stepping into one of these we find a dingy room with a stone floor, and one bed, on which have been found sleeping the man and his wife and four children, two of whom, a boy and girl of 12 and 14 years, slept with their heads to

the foot of the bed. The place is bare and grimy enough, but it is used as a manufactory for sweetmeats, which are made on a grimy bench near the window, and hawked about the street by the man and woman. The boy and girl are shoeless and tattered, and covered with dirt, ill according with a bright green lawn tennis bowler of æsthetic pattern worn by the boy, and as the children are stirring up some mysterious compound in a crock over the fire the scene looks as weird as the underground home of some sprite or gnome in a pantomime story. The pile of ashes and the stagnant water outside, however, soon bring one's mind back to St. Jude's slums. Visiting another room, nine feet square, we find it occupied by a man, wife, and five children; but all are out, except the three infants, who are shut in alone. One is asleep on the bed, and the others are in a rag shakedown on the floor. The youngest, with shrunk, skeleton-like face, is crying, and the next, about two and a half years old, acting the part of nurse and trying to soothe it. The floor of the room is falling through, the stench of unwashed clothes and filthy accretions is abominable, and there these little ones lie after midday, uncared for, in bed, shut up by themselves. In another room is a poor woman apparently with nothing on but her ragged outer dress, which, like the wearer, shows traces of better days. She is sweeping up her room, in which only some three or four articles of furniture and the sacking of a bed are left out of a home wrecked by a drunken husband, a cabinet maker, whose only child, a bright, intelligent boy of nine, is moping about unable to go to school because he is half naked. The mother, with heartbroken sobs, speaks of her forlorn condition and says she has not a bonnet, or shawl or shoes with which to go before the School Board to answer their summons. The adjoining room is occupied by a husband, wife, and five children; the husband a baker, only obtaining casual employment, and sometimes only earning 6d. in a day, but the children are well cared for. In Great Ann street a plasterer earning 14s. a week, and his wife earning 8s. a week as a tailoress, live with their four children in one small room, where the children are left neglected, some of them lying in bed all day. In one room where there is little of the furniture left but the bed, a young sober couple, with their two children are struggling hard for a living, and though they owe 8s 9d. for rent they still try to make headway, and impoverished as the room is it is kept clean. The husband, a labourer in casual employment, would only be too glad to get half the money some of his companions in filthy dwellings are receiving, and the

wife says she often has to make a loaf of bread, two ounces of butter and a pennyworth of pork rinds do for a day's living, and if they were not steady and sober they would not be trusted for the rent. Here is another deserving case in which a baker, out of regular work ever since a strike at his place of employment, says there are so many small shops where the shopkeeper and a boy now do the baking that many journeymen bakers cannot get work, and he would be glad to get any situation. His wife says they have parted with most of their furniture, and she fears they will have to go into a one-room tenement. He has a twenty years' character. We have several cases of this kind in St. Jude's. On the other hand, here is one instance of a family of husband, wife, and five children, earning in all from 25s. to 30s. a week, living in a wretched plight in one room in Brick street, with scarcely a bit of furniture besides the bedstead and a shattered table and chair. It is in a tenement house, and a young woman, smoking a short clay pipe, comes out as we enter. Another similar case is that of a nail maker, who can earn 3s. 6d. a day if he likes, but with his wife and five children, from one-and-half to 13 years old, he only has one room with a single bed, where all sleep, some at the head and others at the foot, and the whole place is in the filthiest condition. We could record other cases where children, boys and girls of twelve and thirteen, have scarcely any clothes in which to go outside their wretched rooms, or to protect them in this bitterly cold weather, which is now bringing intense suffering to those unclad children. It is true that there are some instances in which hard-hearted parents have sold clothes given to their children, but school board officers and others have shown us many cases in which it would be a real charity at the present time to send clothing for the poor little ones. But here is an extraordinary case for the teetotallers—an old lady of "five score years and ten," living in a brightly kept little home in Brick street. She opens the door to us herself; shakes hands heartily, says she has been a teetotaler 50 years, has a young daughter of 65 summers; and last year, thanks to the friends at the Brick street Mission, she had a trip to Weston-super-Mare, where she "enjoyed herself very much." A well-seasoned "short clay" on the mantelpiece betrays her fondness for the weed, and she admits the soft impeachment.

COMMON LODGING HOUSE LIFE.

A chapter could be written on life in common lodging houses in St. Jude's, with its strange scenes, its varied incidents, and its singular groups of men and women and children of chequered histories.

There are about thirty of these places in St. Jude's, capable of accommodating from 10 to 70 or 80 persons a night. They are far different now to what they were in the old days when not under such close restrictions as to the sleeping accommodation and the separation of the sexes in cases of single persons, and when one house had its gipsy kitchen, another its thieves' retreat, a third its beggars' home, and others their kitchens for tramps and "travellers," with secret signs and codes little understood by the outer world of respectability. Much of this has passed away, and if the sham gipsy is not quite extinct, the type is not so distinct as formerly in the motley assemblages at the St. Jude's lodging houses. Still the life there is many sided and strange, and is drawn from all classes of society. Men of education, who have graduated at Oxford, ministers, ex-scripture readers, schoolmasters, town councillors from distant places, pass in review as we analyse the curious groups, and in one case a naval officer acted as deputy for the landlord, and ruled the common kitchen with something of the smartness with which he once gave his orders from the quarter-deck of a British man-of-war. The houses, though not so classified as they used to be, have still their distinctive grades, and a first-class tramp and beggars' "kitchen" is a place of luxury and cheerfulness compared with the homes of many industrious poor and their families in the single room tenements, while it is a bright paradise contrasted with the desolation of scores of homes we have seen. First-class tramps would perhaps form the bulk of the motley assemblage picturesquely grouped about a room, twenty feet long, well-lit with gas, and well-warmed with a great blazing fire three or four feet square. The fountain of hot water is hissing away for tea making, and at seven o'clock when the warm air is laden with the many compounded smells of savoury edibles of which tramps and travellers are so fond—fried chitterlings, pork cuttings, black puddings, red herrings, sprats, bloaters, liver and bacon, steak and onions, and numerous other dishes abound, for vagrants and workers alike have returned from their day's labours, and the spoils of these Philistines make up a goodly meal for the night. Sometimes, preferring the easy-going Bohemian life of a common lodging house kitchen, a mechanic will be found amongst the company, where also youths who have run away from home find a refuge. Some men with wives and families live in these places for months, and pay a small sum per night for a room. In a "first-class" house the bedrooms, with 20 beds in a room, are kept thoroughly clean and well ventilated. Of course there are houses for the dregs of vagrant society as well as for the aristocracy of tramp life, and in a kitchen of one of

there we were present one night at an impromptu service amongst women of the lowest type, with battered faces, haggard looks, and dresses and faded finery all tattered and torn. One had on a fashionable costume of two shades of blue velvet freely slashed with grease; another's dress had been torn away by handfuls, and the poor creature, who had evidently once occupied a far different position in society, looked the very picture of despair; a third of a more sensual type looked on with indifference, and one or two left the place, but most of them, yielding to the suasive manner of a kind-hearted veteran missionary, who shook hands with all, and "was sure they were fond of singing," joined in several hymns, which he started as he unceremoniously sat in their midst with one leg crossed over the other, beating time with his foot. Even a young fellow lolling on a bench by the fire dropped his pipe, doffed his cap, and joined in a swinging chorus.

REMEDIAL AGENCIES

But for the remedial agencies at work in St. Jude's the suffering, especially in the winter, would be far more bitter and intense. The Great Ann Street City Mission is doing a grand work. Many years ago the veteran agent of the City Mission began in the right way by getting hold of the children for his night school, calling in a barber to cut their hair, and a washerwoman to scrub them clean in rooms adjoining the schoolroom. Rather reversing an old maxim—finding they could not be touched for vermin—he cleansed them of their filth first, and taught them godliness afterwards, and the plan has succeeded; and he now has throughout the winter months 160 bright, cleanly girls in his weekly night school; there are also 100 poor boys similarly cared for, and with the assistance of a man, who was once a "Cheap Jack," other work is done. There are also Bible classes for young and old, and the poor are constantly visited and taught in their own rooms, and efforts are made to improve their habits. Besides all this, services are held in the Mission Room, and the improved tone, especially of the children who attend, is most gratifying.

The Bristol District Nurses' Society, whose members seek out cases of illness amongst poverty-stricken families, and engage a staff of nurses to attend them, also accomplishes a great deal of practical good at times of the sorest need. We have already alluded to one of the lady superintendent's letters to us. This lady has also sent us one of the nurses' classified lists showing the extraordinary amount of work accomplished in these one-roomed dwellings of the poor. We have glanced through the diary with much

interest, the more so as it confirms what we have stated. In one case it states that no less than two cwt. of dirt was taken out of one of these "homes."

The New Street Mission Hall and Schoolroom (the latter now occupied as a Board School) was started in 1867 by the Society of Friends, a committee of whom have been zealous in their efforts to raise the moral tone of the neighbourhood, to improve the habits of the people, and to ameliorate their sad condition. The ladies who have been the visitors can give many instances of shocking privation and destitution. This good work was started in a peculiar way. At a meeting of Friends, held in the drawing-room of Mr Edward Fardon in Castle street, the successful work of the St. Philip's mission amongst the navies on the South Wales Union Railway during its construction was spoken of, and the necessity of a mission on a large scale in St. Jude's was discussed. The veteran philanthropist, the late Robert Charleton, and George Thomas were seated at either end of the table, and Messrs. Lewis Fry, J. S. Fry, and others were present. George Thomas, looking to Robert Charleton, said, "I'll give £100 if thou wilt." Robert Charleton replied, "And I will give £150 if thou wilt." George Thomas threw back the challenge with £250, and so they continued in this friendly emulation till the sum reached £700, and the building was erected, a ragged school being added in 1868, and a British Workman in 1874, and there are religious services, Sunday schools, Bible classes, mothers' meetings, and other movements in active work.

We have to acknowledge the receipt of the monthly report of the Red, White, and Blue Ribbon Gospel Temperance Army, who, working from the Pennywell Road Mission Hall, claim to have improved many of the families in the better conditioned parts of this neighbourhood particularised in a former paper. They systematically hold services in the common lodging-house kitchens, a feature of "the supply" being the fact that all the workers are working men. They have also a Sunday school for children, and carry on other work of this nature.

There is yet another hard-working agency in the Brick Street Mission, organised by friends from Stapleton Road Congregational Church. Some ten years ago a Clifton gentleman helped them to purchase two of the wretched tenement houses in Brick street, and these were converted into the mission building, from which thirty to forty workers have gone into the alleys, the courts, the tenement of houses, and the lodging-house kitchens, relieving deserving cases, helping to clothe half-clad children, and giving them religious instruction.

CHAPTER VI.

VEILED POVERTY IN ST. AGNES.

AFTER three weeks amidst the gloomy dens of St. Jude's, with its torpid life and sluggish movement, and its noisome "homes," where young and old alike, cooped up and jammed together, seem to "breathe the darkness all day long," it is like getting above ground to enter the newly-formed district of St. Agnes, on the site of the Newfoundland Gardens and the land abutting on the Froom from St. Clement's to Lower Ashley road. A glance at one or two courts and alleys in Milk street and neighbourhood, bringing one into contact with misery of the St. Jude's type—with some more of one-roomed tenements and occupants lying on filthy rags—only heightens and renders more vivid and fresh the contrast with the new streets of many hundreds of houses, to which we now hasten, in what was formerly the poorer part of the parish of St. Barnabas. Lines of streets now mark the place where hedges and ditches not very long ago divided up the famous "squatters' ground," dotted with irregular groups of rude huts and brick cabins. And in nearly all these streets the unwelcome "flood mark" tells of special privations which the poor people here have periodically suffered. This, however, has not materially altered the character of the place, with its 750 houses and about 1200 or 1300 families, mostly of the poorest, striving, working people. Many of them are only in partial employment—tailors and tailoresses, shoemakers, plasterers, masons' labourers, bakers, and quay labourers. We are speaking now of the poorest portion of the district—some of the houses in Newfoundland road and the many streets running to the right and left of it. That they are a working population is proved by the very limited number of cases—we believe only about a score—which the relieving officer has on his books. We have left behind in the dark shadow of St. Jude's the loafer, the vagrant, the tramp, and the non-worker, and with these we have also left most of the squalor and filth. We have also left there the one-room tenements and

much of the overcrowding. There is no actual slum in St. Agnes. There are some two acres of black ash-heap it is true, with its grimy sides overrunning part of the broad Newfoundland road, to the disgrace of the city. And some of the thoroughfares are still unpaved and unlighted, and here the more uncertain and the shifting population dwell. The majority of the streets, however, have an aspect of respectability, and the four and six-roomed houses look so neat and comfortable that one would little suspect that penury and want and hard poverty are to be found within them. The bitter cry of the needy, instead of ringing loud and shrill as in St. Jude's, is here pitched in so low a key that it can scarcely be heard. The surroundings are not so squalid, it is true, for we have got above the slough of the one-room tenements; but beneath the thin veil of outward comfort and the well-to-do air of the neighbourhood of St. Agnes there will be found in very numerous instances as keen a struggle for daily bread, and biting poverty as severe, though we can hardly say misery so great, as amongst the honest poor of St. Jude's. As we shall presently show, the religious, benevolent, and social movements on foot here are saving a young and crowded suburb from lapsing into the lamentable state of older parts of the city. And the conditions, notwithstanding some difficulties, are favourable—chiefly owing to the scope afforded for distributing the population. The people in partial work cannot afford to pay 5s. or 7s. a week for housing their families, but two families occupy one house, and thus reduce their weekly rent to 2s. 6d. or 3s. 6d. each; and it is estimated that about 50 per cent. of the houses are occupied by more than one family. The contrast with the single rooms, however, is very striking. Even in the poorest of these dwellings there is some semblance of "home," and in most of them there is a real home life, which, compared with the thriftlessness, squalor, and child misery in St. Jude's, is most encouraging. This is specially noticeable in the care of the children.

We do not mean to say that there are not cases of drunken parents whose children are miserable, or that the little ones here have the "rosy knees and supple roundedness" of those cradled in luxurious homes; but real sacrifices are often made for them, and their vitality is stronger and more pronounced. Here is the case of a labourer in casual employment, a steady, sober man, whose earnings for the last twelve months have only averaged 10s. a week. He has a wife, who has just given birth to her twelfth child. Eight of the children are at home, and two boys of these earn a few shillings a week to help the family income. They occupy a six-roomed house at 6s. 6d. a week, letting off one of the rooms to a widow and her daughter for 1s. 6d. a week. Though the mother has only been confined a week she is sitting up in the bedroom, has all the little ones round her—in fact the family belongings in the kitchen have been removed to her bedroom during her illness, and the children have just had their tea there, and one chubby little fellow of five years, described as his "mother's pet," is nestling down by her side—"shoeless," but happy as a prince of the blood royal. The poor woman says she dreads going down stairs again as the rooms are so cold and chilly from the effects of last year's flood, the water having been 2 feet 6 inches high in the lower apartments. No fewer than 100 inundated houses were deserted around here after the flood, but they are now rapidly filling again. In one impoverished home a plasterer, out of regular work ever since last Whitsuntide, has been seeking employment elsewhere and has just come home to find his wife has been obliged to part with chairs, tables, pictures, and the mattress from their bed to get food for herself and five children, as her husband states that when in London he could only get three or four days work a week. A daughter earns 2s. a week, and the mother, who has been a domestic servant, cannot get work, so that they are in a state of the greatest destitution. We listen to many a tale of sorrow and severe struggle to live on the part of poor needle workers, who are amongst the most numerous victims of the fierce competition now going on in all trades. Here is a case of a widow who mainly supports herself and six children by cheap coat making at the wretched pay of nine-pence per coat, the worker having to find thread and twist and needles. Working far into the night she can make three coats in two days, but she cannot get full work even of this kind, and she complains bitterly of married women crowding the labour market when they have husbands who should support them. If it were not for the earnings of the elder children they would have to

go into one room instead of having half a house. The children are well fed, though poorly clad, and this humble home of industry is not without some ray of social sunshine, as manifested by the merry, mischievous face of the youngest boy, who, barefooted and stockingless, is rolling on the floor before a good fire as comfortably as though he were reclining on a rich Turkey carpet. The rent of the house is 6s. a week, but two rooms are let off at 2s. 6d. Here is another case in which a widow by similar work entirely supports herself and five young children. She gives 3s. a week for half a six-roomed house, and she gets 1s. 3d. to 1s. 5d. each for making men's coats, lining them, quilting them with wadding, and finding her own thread and twist. She gets plenty of work, but to earn from 10s. 6d. to 12s. a week she has to stitch twelve hours a day. The sewing machine has enabled her to do more work, but for scarcely more money, than in the old hand-sewing days, and she not only works twelve hours a day, but all through the night on Fridays. She has a baby ten months old, and she has been known sometimes to nurse the baby all night while sewing, till weary and worn she has fairly broken down, and "cried for two hours" before she could continue her hard task. We were told of other instances in which women make boys' coats and jackets at 2½d. each! Two women working twelve hours a day make four of these, and thus each earns the miserable pittance of fivepence per day. Who can wonder that we hear of the life being almost crushed out of those jaded women by overwork for such starvation pay? In contrast to the cases just narrated is that of a mechanic earning 25s. a week, but only half of it ever reaches his long family, and but for the earnings of his wife and children the cupboard would be as bare as the home is wretched and poor. Here is a hard case, in which a painter who had by his hard-earned savings nearly purchased through a building society one of these houses. He then died, leaving a widow and eight children; but as the nearly-paid-for house represented property, the guardians could not relieve the family, and till some benevolent friends came to their help they were without any means of subsistence, as the house, which had been flooded, could not be readily let. In the unlighted streets nearest the river we come upon the more wretched homes, with something of squalor in their appearance. Some of these houses still remain untenanted in consequence of the flood of last winter. Often those that are let are occupied by a shifting class, who are in one week and disappear the next. Others have the windows broken, and they seem given up to that condemnation to which they were attempted to be brought

road, under the oversight of Messrs. Gittens and Vickery, and carried on by the Christian Brethren, originated from the most active work undertaken amongst the squatters and their neighbours for many years by a few members of this body. When the ground began to be laid out for building, a site was obtained, and in response to appeals the money was so promptly subscribed that a fine building as a place of worship was erected to accommodate 900, a lesser hall for 150, with seven class-rooms, in which are held numerous classes for religious instruction. There are 700 children in the school, with 36 teachers, and between 500 and 600 persons attend the evening services at the chapel. The conductors, who have the site for a large school, state that they could get another thousand children if they could accommodate them, and they wish to get £1500 with which to erect the building. It costs them \$65 a year to work the Sunday school alone, and they have a library for the children and circulate 4000 periodicals in the way of wholesome literature amongst them. They also visit all families attached to their church. There is also the more recently erected Mount Tabor Chapel in the middle of the district, and specially prominent in the social and religious uprising of the new neighbourhood has been

THE CLIFTON COLLEGE MISSION

In dealing with the district just described we have no wish to ignore the parish of St. Clements, where there is a large amount of real poverty in the homes of the poor under the watchful care of the Rev. J. Wadsworth and co-workers, or the densely-populated parish of St. Matthias-on-the-Weir, at which we glanced in an earlier chapter. But the district of St. Agnes, into which a poor population streamed with something of the sudden flow of one of the overwhelming floods of the neighbourhood itself, presents peculiar features of interest to anyone inquiring into the housing of the poor. Both before and after the sudden influx of people, the Rev. E. A. Fuller, of St. Barnabas, like the Rev. C. Witherby in the old days at his end of the district, worked most manfully for the relief and the elevation of the poorest of the poor. But, despite the other agencies at work, the difficulty of coping with such a rapidly-growing parish, which soon increased to 10,000 people, was so apparent that in 1875 the Rev. Dr. Percival, the head master of Clifton College, looking out for some field of work in a poor neighbourhood in which to interest the boys of the College, selected the large area only now formed into the separate district of St. Agnes, the ordinary expenses being met by the offertories in the College chapel. The neigh-

bourhood at that time was so rough that it presented one of the most difficult fields of work in the whole city. A large workshop was converted into a mission room, and a coffee tavern opened next door, and the Rev. H. D. Rawnsley was the mission curate till July, 1878. After his departure there were several changes, the Rev. E. A. Fuller carrying on the work in the intervals, and giving the heartiest support to the mission throughout. It must have been hard work indeed in those days, when such was the rowdiness of a certain section of the rough element that the mission room was stormed, and the windows often broken. The coffee tavern was worked at a loss, and there were many discouragements when the Rev. T. W. Harvey took charge of the district in 1881. Much of the rough element had disappeared, but that there was plenty of it left was manifested by the frequent smashing of the mission windows, so that they had to be barred with wire and netting; while on one occasion an attempt was even made to fire the building. Mr. Harvey gradually succeeded in interesting the people themselves in the work. He got the carpenters and painters and other mechanics to themselves take in hand the renovation of the mission room. Ladies came from Clifton and visited their homes constantly. The mission hall brightened up and attracted crowded assemblies, and as the tone of the people began to improve they desired a more suitable building as a place of meeting and religious services. The temporary mission room was not only overcrowded, but was immediately opposite the waste space of ashes and refuse where swings, steam "merry-go-rounds," and shows nightly attracted hundreds of young people; and frequently the Litany had to be said to some popular air from barrel organ or hurdy-gurdy. The Rev. J. M. Wilson, head-master of Clifton College, identifying himself with the work quite as closely as had his predecessor, asked for an expression of opinion on the part of the working men and their families, and in a week 1400 signatures were given to a memorial for the purpose. Mr. Wilson afterwards had an interview with the working men's committee, and he was so impressed with their representations that he at once said he would give £500 for the object in view, and with the liberality of his friends in Clifton and elsewhere, supplemented by subscriptions amongst the working men themselves, £1948 in all was collected, and the new mission room for religious services and other work was built and opened in May, 1882. It will accommodate between 300 and 400. In February this year a working men's club room, 40 feet by 20 feet, with library, was added, and the total cost of the mission buildings, with part of fixtures, &c., has been

about £2500, of which only £150 now remains to be cleared off; and then it is contemplated to erect a gymnasium. There is a library of 500 volumes, besides bagatelle and billiard boards, a bar for tea, coffee, and cocoa, and estables; and the management is entirely in the hands of a committee of working men, who carry on the business with such keen business capacity that the coffee bar is self-supporting. There are 150 members in the club, and the subscription is one shilling per quarter. In connection with the Mission, there are Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Societies, a Cricket Club, entertainments, Bible classes, night schools, mothers' meeting, sewing classes, singing classes, Provident Society, Temperance Society, Sunday school, a brass band, and a Dramatic Society. In this social movement, Mr. Harvey has got together some of the most thoughtful of the working men; and he is succeeding in the plan he laid down of reaching the poorest of the population through the class just above them and showing them in that class of which they have the closest touch the ideal to which they might reach by a little self-effort. The working men have special advantages in hearing addresses from masters and others associated with Clifton College, and they themselves take intelligent part in discussions and in papers read. We have now before us a most ably-written paper by one of their number—a shoemaker—on the subject of "Working Men's Clubs, and their influence upon the homes of the working classes" (read at one of the weekly meetings). We have no space to quote its salient points, but the writer says:—"A very large proportion of the labouring classes scarcely know the name of home; the word has not the same meaning to them, unhappily, that it has to most, or I should say, all of us here. It is simply a place to sleep after the day's drudgery is over, till the next day's task shall come." The Rev. T. W. Harvey has now been appointed by the Bishop to the charge of the district, and a grant of £2500 has been made from the Bristol Church Extension Scheme, and an effort is being made to raise £2500 more for a new church to be erected on a site which has been obtained close to the Mission Room. There will also be an endowment of £100 from the Extension Commission Fund, and £50 a year from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. For the relief of the poor the Mission is dependent upon the subscriptions of their own people and the annual Christmas appeal.

A WORKING MAN'S CHURCH.

A hearty worker amongst the poor remarked to us, that if professions of religion were less loud and practical Christianity more real the poor would be far more easily reached than at present. But in the St. Agnes Mission Church this practical social phase has run so close alongside the religious work that it presents a good type of the "pioneer mission church of the future" amongst the poor districts of a city. In the Tudor style of architecture, it is simple in design, but has a very handsome exterior, which with the stained glass windows, has caused even the roughs to respect the building. As an instance of the practical uses to which it has been put we may state that ever since it has been built the entertainments designed to elevate the people have been held in the building where the Sunday services are conducted. When the flood inundated the houses of the poor in October, 1882, and affected 300 or 400 families, the Mission Church was turned into an old clothes shop, from which those who had most of their clothes destroyed or carried off by the flood were supplied; and with £530 from the Mayor's fund, a sum of £120 (thanks to the liberal help of Clifton College and friends in Clifton) was distributed to the sufferers. One poor lad, fond of music, had invested the savings of years in a piano, which was entirely ruined; and a working man who had made an organ and a piano had both destroyed by the flood. The entire desertion of nearly 100 houses round the Mission room and the changes caused by the flood drove back the work of the Mission nearly twelve months, but it has now fully recovered, and is carrying on its social, educational, and religious work on the most generous lines. In the service room where the Bishop of the diocese on the Sunday preached and administered the Communion, we were in the week present at a practical "cookery lesson," given at a mothers' meeting. A section of the chapel round a registered grate was screened off for the purpose, and a lady from Clifton made and cooked, before her class of mothers, cheap Victoria puddings and savoury dishes from tinned meats, which were afterwards handed round, highly approved of, and quickly consumed. Altogether the Clifton College Mission work has obtained a very close touch of the people, and the tone of the neighbourhood has been decidedly raised by this and other kindred influences at work there.

CHAPTER VII.

BELOW FLOOD LEVEL.

IN the present inquiry into the condition of the Homes of the Poor, the mode of life and the habits of the poor themselves, and the hard pressure under which they often struggle for the bare necessities of existence, we are quite aware that a mass of information has been obtained entirely outside the purview of sanitary officials. The points of observation have been so many sided that the hard lines of officialism would have to be overstepped before the eye of authority could take in all that has come under our personal observation. We have thus obtained facts with which we have endeavoured to deal temperately, and we have presented them so free from exaggeration that those whom we have been privileged to accompany in gleaning these facts have afterwards expressed their astonishment at our describing some of the sad scenes so mildly. In addition to this we have seen the homes of the poor through official spectacles, only to realise how inadequate is the vision thus obtained. We know that some of the children who survive to get into the hands of the School Board show astonishing vitality. On the other hand, the miserable little ones under school age have presented most pitiable sights; and even when they go to the elementary schools we have on all hands complaints on the part of schoolmasters of the difficulties of dealing with children whose physical condition has been so undermined by privation and noisome surroundings that the greatest hardship is forced upon the teachers and pupils alike in exacting from them the present requirements of the elementary education code. Question the Board School teacher or clergyman in the absolutely poorest districts, and he will confirm this statement. It is true we have not abused our privilege by holding up to public view a single family, or by giving the name of a single person or the particular number of any house. This would be entirely apart from our purpose or the task we have undertaken. But if the Sanitary Authority wish to

investigate the actual state of things we have described, they must do so through other than official sources, and when they go into St. Jude's they must not carefully take with them official spectacles, and request that the dimmed glasses may be well rubbed in order that they might plainly see the worst that well-disciplined officialism can show them. Though disease might not at present prevail, health, especially amongst children, must be sadly undermined in St. Jude's, where little ones, underfed and overwhelmed with dirt and filth, are to be found. We affirm that there is a crying need for the dingy tenement houses to be cleansed of their putrid accretions, and that this might be done by bringing to bear upon them powers already in existence—by registering the houses, and thus enforcing upon the owners of the property a recognition of their obligations as well as their privileges. We are told by the sanitary officer in his report that "tyrannous landlords" are the creation of sentimental writers. Practically the landlord in instances under our notice, exacting from the deputy on the ground floor a certain rental for the house, leaves him to let the single room tenements as best he can, and get his own lodging or what more he can out of it, while the house year after year is untouched for repairs, cleansing, or whitelining. The sanitary officer recommends that the regulations should not be enforced in their entirety, because, amongst other reasons, such a course would deprive some of the owners—widows and aged people—of their means of livelihood. How an insistence of cleanliness and a wholesome whitewashing of clammy staircases and noisome passages would bring about such a disaster we can in no way see. But we can readily imagine the landlords of the tenement houses rejoicing at the full absolution thus given them by the Bristol Medical Officer of Health. And the hearty thanks of these apostles of dirt—out of one of whose "homes for the poor" two cwt. of filth was once carted—may well be voiced in

James Russell Lowell's lines in the Biglow Papers :—

This doth our cup of mercies fill—
This lays all thoughts of sin to rest ;
We don't believe in " principle,"
But we do believe in " interest."

Leaving St. Agnes and passing along the banks of the Froom and the tributary mill streams, we come to the parishes of St. Simon's and St. Werburgh's, in the district familiarly known as Baptist Mills. The name is generally supposed to have been derived from the Baptists in 1651, renewing their infant baptism there by complete immersion in the Froom; but a more authentic source tells us of certain French cambric weavers coming to England and settling in this basin of the Froom and establishing their batiste mills—and they thus gave to the place the name of Baptist Mills. The Froom and its streams offered special facilities for industries requiring mills, and between 150 and 200 years ago numbers of workmen were brought over from Flanders to found there the brass and copper smelting works which in 1836 were removed and subsequently transferred to Keynsham, where they are still in existence. Cottages were built for the workmen, and substantial remnants of these show that the "jerry builder" could scarcely have been known in those days. He has rather been the product of modern civilisation, and here he has certainly been raised, like some evil spirit, to be the curse of half a district. Seizing upon this natural basin of the Froom, subject to repeated floods, he in an evil day commenced to build there some houses for the rapidly increasing population of the neighbouring districts. As the houses were run up they were quickly occupied, and with the increasing demand the jerry builders multiplied in number, till it became a race between them who should get the houses up the quickest. The structures were of such mushroom growth that we are assured by a resident mason that he saw a small four or five roomed house erected to the roof by three men and a boy in a fortnight. Streets sprang up as if by magic. Bricks that had never seen a kiln and had only been half-baked in the sun were partially held together by questionable mortar, almost innocent of lime. In numerous instances little attempt at anything like secure foundation was made. As soon as the first floor was erected the builder could secure a "draw" of money, and in too many instances this was his only care. The low level houses were the earliest occupied, and letting from 4s. 6d. to 6s. per week they were soon filled, two families in many instances taking one house. The wretched dwellings held together pretty well till there came the great flood of October 24th, 1882, when constant rains, followed by extraordinary

tides, caused the Froom to rise from 13ft. to 15ft. above its ordinary level. The water was pent up behind the Stapleton road and Mina road bridges till their parapet walls fell, and the flood devastated the whole neighbourhood. At the same time that the Mina road bridge wall gave way the embankment wall of the Lower Ashley road bridge suddenly yielded to the pressure, and the water poured like a torrent from a flood hatch into the streets and houses. It was three feet above the roadway of the bridge, six feet above the lower part of it, and 12 feet above the ordinary level of the river. In one house the water rose to a level of 9ft. 6in., and in another near the embankment it poured into a ground floor room in such a torrent that had not the inmates escaped just before to their bedroom they would all have been drowned. The mud and filth deposited after the water had receded left the place so damp and unwholesome that the occupants of this dwelling lived upstairs for nearly six months! In the mead between this spot and Mina road bridge, as our readers will remember, a youth, with his horse and cart, was carried away by the current, and the poor boy lost his life, while a carter named Porter only escaped by climbing a tree, and his horse and dray were also carried down the stream. In the roads and streets policemen lit the gas lamps from boats, with which they rescued scores of people from the bedrooms of houses which showed signs of collapsing, and two of which fell in shortly after nearly a dozen persons had been removed from one of them. Clergy and others of the district spent the night in rescuing people or conveying food to them. At the St. Werburgh's end of the district it was found next morning that the flood had swept clean through some of the houses from back to front, and the gingerbread structures falling in left only the outer walls standing. The families, who had lost nearly all their belongings, crowded into the uplying streets—two or three in a house till the flood had entirely subsided, when many of them returned; and with the flood of charity from the Mayor's fund, which proved fully equal to cope with the extreme devastation of the flood itself, they restocked their homes and set about drying the houses. Curious stories are narrated of families who, though entreated to leave their dwellings which had been inundated with the flood, refused to do so, and in some cases while the Mayor's fund was being distributed and weekly supplies of coal given, the poor people frankly said they "could not afford to leave," and with a reckless indifference to their health they remained. Two houses which had been deserted were found next week occupied by families who were entire strangers to the neighbourhood. They had "taken

the houses" as a speculation to come in for a share of the Mayor's fund. They told sad stories of their losses and sufferings by the "awful flood," but they were soon found out, and, "the business" proving a failure, they cleared off. The Sanitary Authority condemned some of the dwellings, but in attempting to get the necessary order from the magistrates they were defeated. They, however, branded the district with iron "scare posts," showing how much each street was below flood level, 5ft., 4ft. 6in., 3ft., and 2ft.; and many of these houses—"mere shells for the living"—are working out their own condemnation and crumbling to ruin almost as quickly as if they had been placed in the tombs of the dead for the moth and the rust to corrupt.

A YOUNG SUBURB IN PREMATURE DECAY.

A stranger passing through some of the streets of this young suburb would be astounded at their present appearance. If the Destroying Angel had passed over the place and withered up parts of it, the "tribulation of desolation" could hardly be worse. Many of the new houses are uninhabited, the walls begrimed with dust, the windows wrecked, and in a few cases even the doors carried off their hinges. In some below flood level the roofs and upper floors have fallen into the basement, where they lie a curious mass of lath and plaster and flimsy-looking stairs and rafters. Others have scarcely more than the roofs left, and these, limp and bent, threaten to fall in at any moment. What the flood did not accomplish, bands of wreckers, prowling about the neighbourhood at night, seem to have achieved, for they have wilfully demolished railings and walls and doors and window sashes. They have even extended their depredations to the new streets beyond reach of the flood, and in one street, in house after house, wrecked windows are boarded up, and notices are affixed offering five shillings reward for the discovery of the offenders. Some houses with crazy foundations have large gaping fissures in the walls, or are scored with fantastic gashes and are only supported by their neighbours, while the slime and mud left by the flood as it oozed up through the sewer gratings still begrimes the inner walls. Though more than a hundred of the houses were deserted many are now reoccupied, but at greatly reduced rents, and in some of these the walls are in a sad plight. In one, only vacated a few weeks ago, we were asked to "tread lightly" as we ascended the stairs, as our guide and his family had only gone to bed with fear and trembling every night while they occupied the place lest the house should collapse like a pack of cards. Huge cracks in the walls, a section four feet wide

fallen out altogether, and other places only requiring a push with the hand to send the wall into the next room afforded ample proof of the necessity of the caution. The rent of the better-conditioned houses ranges from 4s. 6d. to 6s. per week, but in some of the worst streets, where the dwellings have remained empty a considerable time, landlords have been offering them at 3s. a week for a limited period. It is right, however, to state that, more than twelve months having elapsed since the flood, most of the houses are now dry. The inhabitants universally speak of the district as a most healthy one, but for the temporary drawback of the floods; the appearance of their children certainly goes far to confirm this statement, and in comparatively few instances did we hear of complaints of rheumatism and bronchitis. Where the Sanitary Authority have been able to complete the channelling and paving of the streets the houses get occupied, and in despite of the ugly "below flood level" marks, signs of the suburb recovering are not wanting. We may instance Sevier street, where notwithstanding that at the lower end the flood mark stands at nearly five feet, almost every house is occupied, and the dwellings themselves look substantially built. Indeed it is now quite the aristocratic street of the neighbourhood. In Mina road and other places landlords have been raising some of the houses above flood level, and these readily let. We learn that the cheaper rents at which the dwellings in some streets are let are gradually bringing back the people even from the higher levels, and doubtless as the neighbourhood gets repopulated someone with sufficient enterprise will be found to rebuild the houses now in a dangerous condition, and construct them above flood level. Cart-loads of excavated earth, rapidly filling up the natural basin where the water lodged between the mill stream at the back of York street and Mina road, will apparently have the effect of diverting any overflow from the stream into the Mina road, and whether any provision has yet been made to carry it off we are unable to learn, but the lower parts of Mina road near the bridge have been raised fully three feet. Close to the bridge are seven or eight acres of meadow, which look well adapted for a public "open space" if protection could be secured from the flood. But only three weeks ago, when we had two or three days' rain fears of a flood were entertained, and a warning was sent to the Corporation to have precautionary measures taken with the harbour water.

The premature decay we have spoken of must be understood to only apply to the houses. The population of the district are mostly working, striving people, many in partial employment only, and divid-

ing the rent of a house between two families. They are potters, shoemakers, tanners, brick-makers, labourers, and men employed at gas works and the neighbouring mills. The stoppage of building operations and the closing of the brick yards threw some hundreds out of employment, and many have found work at the Severn Tunnel and other places. In the St. Werburgh's part of the district the poverty is by no means so severe as that to be found in Baptist Mills proper, the locality of Botany Bay perhaps being the poorest portion of St. Werburgh's. In a house in York Street we find an old man of 67, with his wife and grandchild. The man is a labourer, only getting a day's work now and then; he went there six months after the flood, was given twelve weeks' rent to "dry and cleanse the house," and pays 2s. 9d. a week. There is much want of work, though it is not so great as last year. Here is the case of a labourer, a hard working wife, and five children, living in two rooms at 2s. per week; husband has done very little work for two years, nearly all the furniture sold for food, but children well fed and rooms kept clean. In James's street, even beyond the points where the flood reached, there are many houses untenanted, and the windows having been wrecked by roughs when the unmade roadway was deep in mud before last year's flood. In the portion which was inundated a labourer, earning 16s. a week, with wife and nine children, pays 3s. 6d. a week rent, and helped by his wife's earnings as a washerwoman keeps a tidy home, and pays small sums for the elder daughter's training at a servant's home; six of the children attend the Board School, and the thrifty wife says she is "glad to get rid of them while she works." In another street, as yet unpaired, a labourer only partially employed, his wife and seven children, pays 3s. a week for a five-roomed house, though he sometimes only earns 9s. a week; the wife helps by doing washing, but has suffered from rheumatism ever since the flood, two of the children are recovering from measles, friends from St. Werburgh's help them, and school fees are paid for four of the children at the Board School. Here is a neatly-kept home of industry, where a widow with six children pays 4s. 6d. a week for a five-roomed house, letting off a portion of it; the elder boy earns 8s. a week, the fees of two of the children are paid at the Board School, and the mother often works from five in the morning till ten at night at match-box making at 2d. per gross, and gets the children to help sand-paper the boxes. She says she prefers a day's washing any day to the match-box making,

A LOCAL BOTANY BAY.

If one asked many Bristolians where their Botany Bay was situated they would repudiate having within the boundary of their birthplace any spot stigmatised by the title of that celebrated penal settlement. But amongst the civic officers and the residents of the district under notice the place is as well known as the Council House or the Corn Exchange. It extends from the back of the houses in Lower Ashley Road to the brook on the one side, and from the "conduit" to the river on the other; and if we mistake not it gives its title to at least one publichouse. It did not, however, gain its ugly name from any disreputable character of its people. It was christened after a very simple, but what proved a most effectual fashion, at a time when it was considered a place so out of the way that a citizen once said, "You might as well go to Botany Bay." The name of this worthy has not been handed down, but his odious comparison was never forgotten, and the title ultimately fixed itself to the place so indelibly that it was accepted by the residents themselves. The "conduit," a reservoir belonging to the Corporation of Bristol, is enclosed in a square stone-built structure, and receives the water from the Boiling Well, situated in the ground adjoining the South Wales Union tavern, and is carried by pipes to the Quay Head. It is one of Bristol's ancient water supplies, and some thirty years ago, when the Corporation substituted iron for the lead pipes which brought the water from the Boiling Well, it was discovered that several persons had tapped the celebrated water "on the way down" for their own use. The conduit-house is opposite Jubilee Row, Botany Bay. In this locality there is a block of three-roomed dwellings, let at 3s. to 4s. per week, and occupied by very poor people—and here we meet with some indications of squalor. The floor was four feet deep here. In one instance a poor woman, whose husband is away for a time, has four children to support, and of these one, 12 months old, is so delicate that it cannot walk, and the eldest, 14 years of age, is in so advanced a stage of consumption that he is scarcely able to leave his bed. The mother lets out one room, and supports the family by washing and mangling. In another case of a mason in work, with wife and six little ones under 12 years of age, the wife goes out to work, taking the baby with her, the other children attending Board School or remaining at home—the rooms almost bare of furniture, and the home sadly neglected. In Jubilee place and Summer's row the flood rushed into the houses to the depth of

6ft., but a resident mechanic, who has a most comfortable little home, has lived in the neighbourhood 23 years, and brought up a large family, says it is a beautiful place in the summer, with the garden, the open space, and the river; and he "would not change for a residence in town for anything," though he had to live upstairs some months after the flood.

As this spot about terminates St. Werburgh's parish, we may here state that under the active supervision of the Rev. J. Fox, the vicar, a complete system of district visiting is organised, there is a Sunday school with a register of 800 children, held in the Mina Road Board School (secured for the purpose); at the Mission-room—lent, we believe, for these purposes by the generosity of Mr. James Inskip—the Bible class, temperance, and Band of Hope meetings are held, and there are other agencies carried on by an earnest band of parish workers; but there is great need of a large mission room or parochial hall for the Sunday school and meetings in the week, and it is proposed to erect one at a cost of £1500, if the money can be obtained. If such a hall were built, and some popular entertainments were organised for the people, probably, as in St. Agnes, beneficial results would follow in a neighbourhood where window-smashing and house-wrecking have been practised as a pastime, though the residents say this has principally been done by outside roughs

NAKED CHILDREN IN BAPTIST MILLS.

Despite the great work accomplished by religious and benevolent institutions, there are numerous cases as yet untouched by any agency other than the School Board, whose officers, dealing with the worst cases of squalor and neglect, constantly come in contact with miserable homes so utterly lacking the ordinary conditions of civilised life that personal observation alone would convince others that such a state of things could exist within immediate reach of church organisations and the most vigorous, active, Christian work. These, of course, are cases in which the parents are utterly regardless of their homes or their duty to their offspring. Here, within a minute's walk of chapels and churches, in one of a row of small, dirty-looking, four-roomed houses, is a shocking case of a potter, his wife, and six children living in a most deplorable state. A child of five, with weak eyes and ragged clothes, answers the knock at the door, and is often left in sole charge of those of the children not of school age. A boy of three is running about absolutely naked—except for the dirt, which has given his flesh a dingy, whitey-brown appearance—and he follows her into the passage, and peeping from the door of the

living room is another child in the same condition. The husband is in work and the wife also gets some employment, but there is something terribly wrong in this home, and but for the School Board the state of savagery in which these little Christians would be brought up would be fearful indeed. The one five years old is a diminutive girl in a most weakly condition. In houses in this neighbourhood we get the sickening odour of the dens of St. Jude's, and accompanying this there is at once a noticeable lowering of tone and the moral and physical fibre is weak. In another home, remarkable for its accumulated dirt, live a mason's labourer, in partial work, his wife a needlewoman, who also works, and five children. The children are not neglected as in the last case, but the dirty condition of the place is most unwholesome, and the dampness of some of these cheaply made houses increases the squalor. In some cases the windows are broken and stuffed with rags. The rent is 4s. per week. In an adjoining part of Baptist Mills live a labourer in partial work at 14s. a week, his wife and five children renting two apartments of a five-roomed house; the children have no clothes in which to go to school, and the wife, who has as much as she can do to get bread for them, says she is afraid they will be obliged to "go into one room soon." In another part, near Baptist street, each house is occupied by two families, the walls of some of the dwellings are falling to pieces, dirt abounds everywhere, and the children, ragged and dirty, are neglected—a result nearly always following a grimy home. In the midst of a place like this, however, we found a shoemaker (so ill that he can do but little work), his wife, and six children; but the man and wife being steady and careful of their family, the home is of a far different character, and has some signs of comfort under the most straitened circumstances. In this locality we met with many cases of impoverished homes. In one house of four rooms live a mechanic earning 24s. a week, his wife, and six children, and a fellow mechanic, a carpenter, with his wife and four children. In both instances the home is most impoverished, and in one, in which the wife states that her husband's work is very slack, nearly all the furniture has been sold for food. Here is a case of a commercial clerk, with wife and six children; the husband lost his situation some years ago, and, gradually sinking into a destitute state, has never recovered his position. He does odd bits of writing for any one, and thus earns 10s to 12s. a week; 3s. 6d. a week is paid for the four-roomed house, and most of the furniture has been parted with long ago, and the wife is poorly clad. There is something of home life in the dwelling, with a cleanliness which

speaks of good early training. In the houses most neglected by the landlords are sure to be found the most unwholesome homes, and in one of these, in which live a workman who is ill, his wife, and five children, and also a labourer, his wife, and two children, we find that the dilapidated front accurately reflects the state of the homes within. There are four rooms between the two families, and the wife of the workman who is ill helps to support the family by washing and charring. In a two-roomed dwelling, almost without furniture, and in a wretched condition, live a man, woman, and four children, the latter sadly neglected. In a row of three-roomed cottages, let at 2s. 10d. a week, some very poor people, with long families, contrive to keep the home going, though under the severest pressure. One of these cases is that of a freestone sawyer, with wife and eight children. He has been out of work for three weeks, during which the School Board fees are paid for the children, and the wife obtains food for them by working as a charwoman; but the home is dreary and bare, and a boy of 13, home from school, is nursing the infant. Another of these houses is occupied by a mason's labourer earning 18s. a week, his wife, and six children, his eldest boy earning 3s. 6d. a week. The children get plenty of food, but there is little sign of comfort in this home. In a number of very small houses, approached by a passage scarcely three feet wide, further cases of extreme poverty come under notice; and in some streets off Peonywell road there is much squalor and neglect, with some exceptional cases of persons with meagre incomes, showing how bright a home can be made with a little attention to cleanliness and the comfort of a home. Here is the case of a labourer earning 18s. a week, with eight children, the eldest of whom earns 3s. a week. He pays for house rent 5s. a week out of the 21s., and though some of the children have not tidy clothes in which to attend the Sunday School, the home is comfortable compared with that of some mechanics in good work, but living in two rooms at 3s. a week. On the other hand, the next case in our note book is that of a mechanic in partial employ, living in his own house—on which there is a mortgage—the children are dirty as well as shoeless, and the place grimy and neglected. Another case is that of a labourer, who has not had constant employment for five years. He has a wife and eight children, and his two elder boys, 17 and 14 years old, help support the family, and the husband has just got a place of work at 16s. a week. Most of the furniture has been

sold, the home is poor, and the little ones grimy and ragged, but they are well fed. Four of them go the Board School. The flood water entered this home to depth of 2½ ft., and the place was damp for months.

In few places are remedial agencies more thoroughly active than in Baptist Mills. As we intimated in an earlier chapter the Wesley Chapel congregation alone have 2500 children on their Sunday school register, and they gather these from a widespread circuit, reaching as far as Lower Easton and Eastville, as well as all the district round Newfoundland Gardens. Their chapel will seat 1400, and at the evening services it is often crowded. In their Wesleyan day school they have 300 children; and they have also district visitors, Christian workers, Bible classes, mothers' meetings, a Mutual Improvement Society for Young Men and Women; a Sunday school children's home visitor, who visits the home of every child absent from the school. Their elementary and advanced singing classes have been in existence for years, and it is estimated that thousands of children (since grown up and living in all parts of the city) have been taught singing in Mr. Gibbon's classes at this school. A sale of work at which we were present in the large schoolroom to clear off a debt of £120 on three years' working of the church, admirably exemplified the healthy life and quickening sympathetic movement so characteristic of the Wesleyans. So widespread is their work that with their mission rooms at Bloy street, and at Lower Easton, Crew's Hole, and Redfield—where a new chapel is now being built—it is estimated that they have no less than 5000 families under their influence, directly or indirectly.

In St. Simon's parish of 5000 people it is estimated that there are 800 very poor families, including many cases of persons who have seen better circumstances. The Rev. N. Y. Birkmyre, the present vicar, has a Sunday school of upwards of 300 children, a Temperance Society, Girls' Friendly Society, a large Band of Hope, and district meeting by ladies of the congregation. There is also a day school of 600 children, the infant and girls' school of which, with grants and fees, pay their expenses. but the boys' school, which will only accommodate 145, is totally inadequate, and the vicar, who has at present to refuse additional applications, is desirous of building a new school for 250 boys on a desirable site in the rear of the church and adjoining the girls' school, in place of the two or three old houses at present used in Millpond street. The vicar hopes to get £1200 for the cost of the new building.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRTH AND MISERY IN ST. PHILIP'S.

RAILWAY travellers who are apt to form their opinions of a place from the glance they get while rapidly flitting through it in a train, have been known to take their measure of the western city from the gloomy and smoke-enshrouded factories, and streets, and courts of St. Philip's. And these superficial observers who have passed through it on a dull, foggy day in December must certainly have carried away with them a most unlovely picture of a district which, in reality, is the city's "workshop"—one of the nerve-centres which daily quicken the throbbing pulse of industrial Bristol. The dust, and grime, and soot mantling every house and street are the outcome of the stern forces at work in its huge factories rather than the cobweb-product of the idle and the slatternly. From the tall chimney stacks of its foundry furnaces and numerous factories dense clouds of smoke, mixed with potent gases, which have been known to utterly destroy vegetation, and to be more fatal to plants than any blight, envelop the place like a murky coverlid, beneath which one would think the daily life must be inexpressibly dull and wearisome. With the exception of a few old rookeries towards the Plain, the place—like some faded-looking men of sixty, left there from extinct engine works and sugar refineries—has grown old with the wear and tear of work rather than the rust and decay of age. Even within the memory of old people whom we met there, the huge spaces now occupied by the Midland railway station, and the goods and locomotive departments and sidings, the Batch, Kingsland road, and the neighbouring thoroughfare to the "Barley Fields" and the Marsh, were covered with green fields and blooming orchards, with lanes edged with hawthorn, and meadows dotted with straggling cottages embowered in honeysuckles. One old lady, now paying one shilling and three-pence a week for a single room, has a vivid memory of "Dead Man's lane" leading from the Batch to Barton hill, through fields where cattle were grazing. For many years

she kept a large school in a cottage in Unity street; and even now, in her one room with bare furniture, and a humble pallet covering nearly half the space, she has a "school for infants." As factory after factory was erected, the fields were encroached upon, and were turned into market gardens, and where Trinity Almshouses now stand there was a vegetable market. The market gardens were gradually overwhelmed by the increasing smoke of factories and houses, and for a long time, till built upon, they became waste ground for booths and Richardsonian shows. These, like the rest, had to make way before the advancing bricks and mortar, and though as we shall presently explain they still have a habitation in St. Philip's, the place so long given up to "the fun of the fair," as to attract sightseers from the surrounding country, became covered with houses and factories. The population rapidly increased till it is now 50,000. Of these no less than 25,643 live in the south district alone. As the latter is the part of which we are more directly speaking in this notice, we may state that of the population of 25,643 there are 460 cases of poor families receiving parish relief, representing 325 persons not able-bodied, 112 able-bodied, and 387 children—total 824, and some few of these cases are paid for by other unions. The collapse of two sugar refineries, and the Avonmouth Engine Works, and the withdrawal of the locomotive works to Swindon by the Great Western Railway Company, took large numbers of the well-to-do artisans out of St. Philip's; but the district maintains its character for possessing a busy, active working population. It is not the regular abode of the loafer, the idler, and the vagrant. There is undoubtedly a great deal of poverty, improvidence, neglect, and consequent misery, and many of the homes are lamentably bare and cheerless; but—if we may except Christmas week—everybody works more or less for a living. With too many the struggle to live is so severe that it keeps week throughout the year.

the only aim is to get 2s. 9d. to pay the rent and sufficient money to buy bread for a long family, and many a hard working labourer will walk to Avonmouth on a bare chance of getting a day's work. Still, as a rule, the children one meets in the streets are well fed, and though in some cases their clothes may be in shreds and tatters, there are very few of them running about without shoes or stockings. One must penetrate the dingy courts off the Plain, and Old Bread street and Cook's road, and enter the houses to find homes of extreme penury and abject misery, and children half-clothed or very nearly naked. The mechanics with their small three-roomed houses at 3s. 6d. to 4s. per week generally have fairly comfortable little homes, though some of them are somewhat crowded; and the want of work is not so great as it has been in the last three or four winters—if we except the operatives in the branches of the building trade and the hoot and shoe makers, in whose callings there is a woeful inactivity just now. It is in the single room tenement houses in Bread street and the Narrow Plain, and the dwellings of the labourer and the bargeman only casually employed, that the greatest poverty exists. There are numerous cases of this kind. Here is one of the most pitiable cases we came in contact with in the Christmas week in a court off John street. A labourer with wife and eight children occupy a two-roomed house at 3s. 3d. per week. The husband gets little employment, the wife hawks fish. The eldest girl is fourteen years old, and the two youngest are twins now two years old. The wife's mother lived with them till she died recently, and they only have one bedroom for the family. As we enter the small stone-floored living-room, bits of holly and gay coloured festoons of paper chain hanging from a few old pictures on the dirty walls suggest the joyous time of feasting and jollity. But a glance round the room makes one only wonder by what grim mockery these symbols of happiness and plenty could have been placed in such a home. Perched on a shattered chair behind the door is a little girl of four, her matted hair almost her only covering, for she only has one ragged garment, which she vainly tries to keep round her body. The twins, bright little boys, sitting on an old box, are each naked but for a thin, worn, tiny shirt, and they are munching half-rounds of bread with hungry appetites. The other children are partially clothed in rags, and the mother, who is peeling a few turnips for dinner, says she has no clothes for her little ones, and her husband is out looking for work, and he sometimes only earns 4s. in a week. That this must be supplemented by some other means is evident, as the children look fairly fed, but one could not help thinking what the

sufferings of these poor little ones would be if intensely cold weather were to suddenly set in. Close by in a three-roomed house occupied by a labourer, wife, and two children, at 2s. 9d. per week, the cramped looking living room has a smart, festive appearance; the husband is in good work. Only one sleeping room, however, is used for the family, as the top bedroom is turned into a fowls' house, for, as the thrifty housewife—who has just driven upstairs a trout hen—reminds us, "heggs is 'andy sometimes." One of the filthiest courts in Bristol is off Unity street, where we could hardly step for filth, which could scarcely be worse in a sty of the pig keepers in the "Barley fields." The houses, small four-roomed dwellings, let at 2s. 6d. per week, do not belie the appearance of the court itself. In one of them, occupied by a labourer, his wife, and eight children, the father and mother are out, the children, in rags and entirely neglected, are peering out of the poorly protected windows, which have been smashed in and blocked up with an old tray, and, though it is close upon midday, the youngsters are still "waiting for their breakfast." This neglected home, with its filthy and sordid surroundings, is even more miserable than that of the naked children already described; and the father and mother are apparently the only members of that family "keeping Christmas." A refuse heap near by suggested the possibility of the place having accidentally dropped out of the Sanitary Authority's list. An official visitation of this locality would certainly not be wasted, for in the next court entered we have to run the gauntlet of a foul passage reeking with the most sickening gases, and with handkerchief to mouth we accomplish it; and get into a court of three-roomed houses where the inhabitants themselves are loud in their outcry about the state of the drains. They pay 3s. 7d. rent, and they mostly have long families. In one house lives a labourer, in full work, with wife and seven children, three of whom are grown up and able to earn something; the wife also does some work. The children are well fed and cared for, and, looking at the total income of this home, one is only surprised at the family not seeking better housing. In the same court, a labourer, with wife and eight children, has two of his children earning 5s. a week, but he himself is only in partial work, and sometimes does not earn a quarter of the wages of one of his boys. The bright, chubby little children evidently have plenty to eat, but they are clothed in the most threadbare rags. As a rule, when a man with a family has got into work, if steady, he soon gets out of a 3s. a-week house. A trifle more money in rent brings him into a better class neighbourhood, if not into a street

in place of a court, and unless the houses are tenement dwellings, the tone of the home at once improves. Here is the case of a plasterer, with wife and three children: The husband has "become steady lately," is getting a few things together, the wife is "happier than she ever was before," the children have a room to play in, and the family will soon move into better quarters. On the other hand, a mechanic in good work, with wife and four children, has one of the most squalid homes we have seen—the children in rags, the small room littered with dirt so that there is hardly room to move; and piled up over the litter are heaps of sticks which the wife is chopping in order to sell and help out the week, as the husband gets a week's holiday for Christmas, and is out making the most of it—from his point of view. It will almost invariably be found, if we except the infamous rookeries which were swept away when the Narrow Plain was broadened by the Streets Improvement Committee, that the moral tone is weakest in the one-room tenement houses and dingy courts. We entered one house from which, not long ago, a man, wife, and two children, and a young woman and three illegitimate children, all occupying one bedroom, were induced to remove, after attention was called to the case by an application for medical attendance or relief for the young woman during her confinement with the third child. The width of the passage-way in front of the houses in this court is only about 3ft 6in. Amongst remarkable instances of the kindness of the poor to one another, we may mention the case of a labourer with his wife and four children living in an alley in a three-roomed house at 3s. 6d. per week. The wife's sister, a single woman, when about to give birth to her third child, suddenly found herself houseless, and the labourer and his wife took these and the wife's aged father into their small home and sheltered them for some weeks. In courts in this alley there are grimy-looking houses with two or three families in each. In another case, in a three-roomed house, for which a widow and her sons pay 2s. 1d a week, the poor woman tells us very calmly that, of five children she has brought up, one daughter is a prostitute through no fault of hers, and with reference to another daughter, a fine, comely woman, with a baby, she rejoices that they have at last "found the baby's father," who has married some other woman. The demolition of the houses on the left of the Narrow Plain has not only cleared the neighbourhood of fearful rookeries and given a broad thoroughfare, but it has thrown open to view the St. Philip's churchyard, now about to be enclosed with a light railing, and turned into a public garden. In one block of houses in Lower Cheese lane we entered some curious little homes of

worn-out parishioners from 70 to 90 years of age. The houses, we believe, belong to the parish vestry, and are let in single rooms to these old people at 7d. per room, including water. The apartments are very small, the headstead sometimes taking up half the room, but the poor old souls look comfortable—they are evidently at peace, for the place is as silent as some "Sleepy Hollow," and some of the walls are quite bare, and there is little of this world's comforts to cheer them, and even the customary symbols of Christmas are absent, yet these Philipians of four score years and ten declare they are quite happy. They get some relief from the parish, and they have a horror of the workhouse.

In some of the tenement dwellings the staircases entered from dark passages are as gloomy as those of St. Jude's. We saw one house where at one time thirty people were found living; but this over-crowding has been considerably lessened of late years. In one four-roomed house we found thirteen people living—a labourer and wife and two children occupied one room; a labourer in full work at £1 a week with his wife and two children another room, and a mason's labourer with wife and three children occupied the other two rooms. In a six-roomed house with wretchedly small apartments the rent ranges per room from 10d. to 1s. 3d.; and one poor old woman suffering from heart disease, and in receipt of relief, pays 10d. a week for a smoky den not more than eight feet square. In one case where the family boasted two rooms on the ground floor, the second room used as a bedroom was an old pantry into which no light could possibly enter, and in the day time it was as dark as a cellar. The staircases in these tenement houses are a little cleaner than those in St. Jude's, but one is obliged to feel his way up and down, so absolutely dark are the entries to the one-roomed homes, while many of the rooms themselves are grimy with dirt and noisome with putrid smells. In one case we find a weary and wan looking widow of 72 at the washtub in a wretchedly poor apartment. She tells us she has two sons who are no good to her and she has "nearly worked herself to death" for them. The poor creature has preserved the elaborately embossed memorial cards of her daughter and husband, and these mementoes occupy conspicuous places on the dingy wall above the fireplace. There are some curious one-floor cottages in the "Barley fields," a name which is still retained by all that is left of the open space, once cultivated as arable land, and now black with the smuts from grim looking factories by which it is hemmed in. Sugar mats have been used to divide off the allotments on which the cottagers have their fowls' houses and piggeries, and notwith-

standing the slushy appearance of the place in mid-winter, with the filth from the piggeries lining the mud footway, we are told that these allotments are turned into gardens in the summer, and onions and lettuces and radishes are still forced into growth there. Some of the cottages remind one of the squatters' dwellings in Newfoundland Gardens; but we will turn from these to glance at

CHRISTMAS IN VAPOUR AND SMOKE.

The streets in the centre of this city have been greasy and muddy enough during the dull, humid weather this Christmas, but the lanes and alleys of St. Philip's seem to have had a double coating of slime and slush, which, added to the murky smoke and vapour laden atmosphere and the curious compound of noisome smells, has proved anything but exhilarating either to the resident or visitor. In the daytime the streets and lanes, with houses often faced by the dead walls of factories, look dreary enough, and at night the meagre fringe of gaslight from small shops or street lamps dimly flickering through the smoke and mist does not improve the uninviting aspect of a place where some thousands of Bristolians have had to spend their Christmas. We have already shown that to many hundreds the joyous Advent season, with its customary family gatherings, its hearty greetings, and its homely rejoicings, brought little change in the dull monotony of their lives, and the hard, stern struggle each day for their daily food. And yet in the midst of so much that is the reverse of exhilarating, and jostling against actual misery, there is plenty of mirth and festivity going on. The Philippians as a body think as much as any other class of the festive time of Christmas. Large numbers employed at factories and works where machinery is extensively used get a week's holiday, and as a result they lose a week's wages. Many would not be absent from work for so prolonged a time if they could help it; but where large numbers are employed, if a certain section resolves to stay away the manager feels compelled to close the works. In other cases there are other reasons for closing a factory for a time. We ventured to suggest to one resident that it must often be a very hard time so far as ways and means are concerned at the end of the week. But the reply was, "We gets plenty of them sort of weeks in a year owing to bad times and slackness of work." Still the Philippians dress their rooms with holly, and even in some of the most barely-furnished homes a few evergreens, a sprig of laurel, and a wreath of bright coloured paper chain might be found. Though they went without the traditional plum pudding, many

would not miss their bit of holly. The publichouses outvie all in Christmas decoration, and they are certainly the brightest and most clean-looking places to be met with in the dark streets. Yet in three days and evenings in St. Philip's we saw comparatively few people intoxicated. One of these was in a house where a drunken woman of 60 was supported on the knees of her grandson, a boy of 15. Another was an epileptic youth in a court, a third was a workman who had a week's holiday, and he was in his own house; and a fourth was a woman with a baby in her arms. She was being led home by two neighbours, and three poor little children toddling along drearily in front of her were now and then kicked by their reeling mother as, in acid tones, she yelled to them to "get on." We don't mean to say that there was not much drinking. A city missionary after going his rounds told us there had been more than usual; but actual drunkenness appears on the decrease. One coal hawker and tinker was so well-to-do that we found him entertaining a family party of ten at breakfast; he had had just a "wee drop," and regretted that he had broken his four months' pledge, which, in "black and white" on a teetotal card, had been nailed to the mantelpiece from the date of his signing it. He was living in the downstairs rooms of a tenement house, with his coal shop in front. He expressed his intention of "signing again soon." Many Philippians find exciting amusement in pigeon flying, and these "columbarians," after arranging a sweep-stake, will spend the day in visiting their different lodgings to ascertain the "homing" of favourite pigeons which have been taken to a distance. The chapel congregations and city mission agents draw large numbers on two or three evenings in the Christmas week by festive gatherings held in the schoolrooms and chapels, and these meetings are made as interesting and attractive as possible. The Salvation Army agents have a monster place of meeting in their "Warehouse" in Lucky lane. It is an immense loft over Mr. Cooksley's nail factory, and the officers state that sometimes as many as 1200 persons assemble there. The place, which is approached by a broad flight of steps, costs the "No. 3 corps" £60 a year, and the expenses of rent, taxes, and salaries reach £4 10s. a week. The "Warehouse" was brightly decorated for the Christmas festival on Boxing night. The walls were adorned with some startling mottoes, the hall brilliantly lit, and on Christmas day a soldiers' banquet or tea, at 9d., was followed by a hallelujah concert at 3d. About 300 attended the tea, and they were as well dressed, orderly, and merry a party as one would wish to see. One of the officers informed us that out of

220 financial members of this corps 100 had been habitual drunkards. A member is only fully admitted six weeks from the time that he comes to the "penitent form," and during that time he is regularly visited at his home by the "sergeants," upon whose report his election is decided. The officer gave us instances in the hall of men whose wretched homes had been entirely altered for the better since they joined the corps. As to some "black sheep" getting amongst them, we were reminded that they specially dealt with "black sheep," and they did not expect all who were drawn in an excited moment to the "penitent form" to stand true. If only half of them did so, much good was accomplished. Amongst the announcements in the concert programme were the following:—"The Salvation Cure with his Guitar," "The Captain with his Fiddle," "Jim, the Little Soldier, with his big soul will sing a new song," "Solos by the Yorkshire Nightingale and the Bristol Warbler," "May singing in December," the whole winding up with the "Salvation Hallelujah Chorus." The concert must have been a curious medley of the grave and the gay, but we did not attend it, as we had accepted an invitation to

A CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME IN ST. PHILIP'S.

For anyone in "the profession" not to know Joe Baker would be to argue himself unknown—Joe Baker, of the Prince of Wales Theatre, St. Philip's—clown, pantomimist, acrobat, gymnast, actor, equestrian, soldier, and theatre proprietor. In the old days when the "fun of the fair" was at its height on the show ground on the Bath, Joe Baker's establishment took the lead in the business done there. He now goes "on tour" with his company, but always returns to Bristol for the winter months and the Christmas holidays, and manages still to secure in the middle of St. Philip's a waste piece of ground on which to erect his Temple of the Drama, capable of holding from 400 to 500 persons. Elsewhere, in less gloomy and depressed neighbourhoods, the company produce such plays as "The Merchant of Venice" and "The Lady of Lyons," but in St. Philip's they always choose something light and lively—the place itself is so heavy. On Christmas eve they selected as a suitable piece "Jane Vere, the Clergyman's Daughter." Wishing to give a performance on Christmas night, "Joseph and his brethren" was the work first thought of, but owing to some conscientious scruples about introducing Joseph on the stage, "The Mistletoe Bough" was substituted. In the afternoon the whole com-

pany of twelve, with supernumeraries and friends, numbering twenty-four, sat down to a Christmas dinner of the good old fare in the theatre, the proprietor proudly doing the honours of the chair. On Boxing night the company produced for the first time the St. Philip's pantomime for Christmas, 1883—"Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp." It was one of the most merry nights of the slushy week, and no one could approach the "Prince of Wales Theatre," or, indeed, any other spot in St. Philip's, without getting besmirched with the blackest mud. Still, in the immediate locality of the theatre the fun was literally in full swing, and rows of flaring naphtha lamps showed "ark boats" and "high flyers," loaded with youthful Philippians, swaying about in mid air. We found the "Prince of Wales" a spacious canvas structure, consisting of stage 14ft. square, clear of the flies, a pit and gallery, the pit and stage having a timber roof. The gallery was raised seat above seat, so that all could see, and the price of admission was 3d. to pit and 2d. to gallery. The proscenium, with a classical scroll, was of French gray, with "A Merry Christmas to all" in snowflakes. Crimson and white curtains draped the side walls of the pit. The house was crowded with a merry and delighted audience, whose boisterous laughter was only restrained by the pit-door attendant when he thought it interfered with the legitimate progress of the Arabian Nights' romance. And the story of the peerless princess, the sordid magician, and the widow's son was rigidly adhered to. The lines had been conscientiously learnt from one of the early editions of the dramatised story, and there was in the performance more of the old fashioned nursery tale and less of the glitter of scenic display, with pert songs of the concert-hall, than we are accustomed to find in the modern fashionable pantomime. The Grand Vizier was represented by the leading lady, a stalwart Amazon, with a grand tragedy voice. She was bedecked in scarlet and gold, and the Vizier's chamber was similarly embellished. The Sultan was got up in gaily coloured apparel, the Princess Badroulbador was young and prettily dressed, and the Vizier's son, Aladdin's mother, the shaggy-browed magician, and Aladdin were all represented, Aladdin being impersonated by a young lady with a vivacity of spirit and an archness of manner that would have won her applause on a far more prominent stage. It is true that the magic cave was a modest affair, and the *andante* by the orchestra of two cornets and a trombone required a little softening for weird and eerie effect, and brilliant red fire did a great part in the transformation scene and the Fairies' Home, but the harlequinade, with smart clown, active panta-

loon, and graceful columbine, arrayed in diaphanous robes, was bustling enough, and was so full of fun as to provoke roars of laughter. The bright faces of the four hundred Philippians showed that they thoroughly enjoyed their pantomime, which lasted nearly two hours. Like all the stories told by the Sultaness Scheherazade to the Sultan of the Indies, it was very diverting, and as it was "for the most part seasoned with a good moral," young St. Philip's might possibly have been spending Boxing night in a far more objectionable form but for the spirited enterprise of Mr. Joe Baker. We were privileged to sit alongside the veteran, and venturing to "question him about the story of his life," we heard much of his travels' history—his journeys through France, Germany, and Spain; and his "feats of broil and battle," when with the Lancers he returned through the Kyber Pass amongst the few that escaped in the first Afghan war. On one occasion, wishing to strengthen his dramatic company by additional talent, he advertised in the *Era*; and the proprietor of the "Prince of Wales Theatre" was not a little astonished to receive offers from artistes who, evidently under the impression that the "Prince of Wales" was even a bigger undertaking than it is, demanded £7 a week for their services. During his temporary absence from the pit a bright-eyed brunette, whose swarthy face suggested a relationship to one of the families owning the "high flyers" and ark boats outside, came in and sat by our side. Turning to a gentleman occupying a seat on our right, during an interval, she said to him in persuasive tones which no gentleman could resist—"Jim, sling us a dooce." We did not quite understand this mystic code; but were soon enlightened by the gentleman disbursing twopence, with which the merry-faced one departed, apparently bent on getting some refreshment. There was a second performance of "Aladdin" that evening, and the veteran proprietor was somewhat exercised in his mind, after all the expense had been incurred, as to how long the St. Philip's pantomime for 1883 would "run."

As we have indicated, there were other amusements for the Philippians during the week. Bazaars, soirées, and a variety of Christmas gatherings were largely attended by those closely connected with the several religious bodies having places of worship or mission halls in the neighbourhood. Quite a network of agencies of this kind is to be found amongst the poorest parts of St. Philip's. In addition to the active efforts of the vicars of Trinity Church and St Philip's Parish Church, there are those of the vicar of Emmanuel, in the Dings, the Rev. R. G. Archer, of

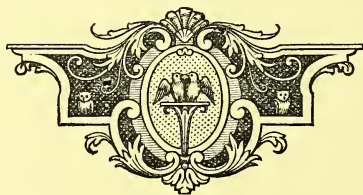
Anvil Street Chapel, with its 600 Sunday school children, and service for 200 ragged children every Sunday evening. Methodist and United Methodist chapels, the Rev. W. Mottram, of Kingsland Road Chapel, &c. The city missionary society have mission halls in Cumberland road and John street. The latter has been established twenty years, and the work has outgrown the limits of the present building. As the pulling down of adjoining houses has offered opportunity for some extension, it has been resolved to build additional class rooms, and Mr. Butler and the friends interested in the mission are about to make an appeal for the purpose of obtaining funds. A start was made by a bazaar held in the Mission hall in the Christmas week. There is also a mission worked by friends from Highbury Chapel, under the superintendence of Mr. Newell; and Miss Leonard and Miss Jey and other ladies do a large amount of visiting amongst the poor.

A most useful institution, requiring to be better known amongst the class for whom it is intended, is the "Mary Carpenter Memorial Home for Poor Working Boys." Founded in memory of one of Bristol's most enlightened and practical philanthropists, it provides a home accessible at any moment to destitute boys from 14 to 18 years of age; in a spacious, well ventilated, and admirably kept building on the Broad Plain. Though close now to the poorest courts this house was once a stately mansion, occupied by a wealthy family, when this was a fashionable suburb of the city and the Plain was bordered with trees. Centuries ago it was the residence of a Mayor of the city, and local tradition has it that this worthy was the first Mayor of Bristol who "kept his carriage." It is in an excellent state of preservation, and the grand staircase leading from the hall suggests its former greatness. Provision is made for comfortably lodging forty poor boys at one shilling a week for each, with use of a bath, a library, and bagatelle board, the latter being placed in the large and comfortable living room. However destitute or ragged a boy might be, if industrious and willing to find work, he is received into the home, and kept for a time even without payment, till he obtains work. Boys are often admitted so ragged that after they have had a bath it is necessary to find them some clothes. To many lads the home has proved the turning point of their lives; but it is comparatively so little known amongst the boys themselves that there are only half the full number in the house at the present time.

Deserving special mention also is the Christian work planned so firmly in this district by the late Major Tireman, who in 1852, at first taking up the

work of Mr. John Victor in the cottage meetings on the Broad and Narrow Plains, subsequently built, solely at his own expense, the Mission hall in Unity street; and his self-denying work and loving service on behalf of the poor having outgrown the limits of the Mission hall, he in 1862 generously contributed upwards of £1000, and built, at an expense of £2500, the spacious structure known as Unity Chapel, where his colleague, the Rev. W. J. Morgan, succeeded him in the pastorate at the Major's death in 1873. Major Tireman was a Nonconformist associated with Bethesda Chapel, but he started his work irrespective of any particular sect, and he and his associates and those who have followed him have simply been termed Christian Brethren. A great work was accomplished during those 20 years of Major Tireman's labours amongst the poor, and has since been successfully carried on by Mr. Morgan. The chapel will hold 1000 persons and it is frequently crowded. There are

600 Sunday school children and 36 teachers; and every bit of space having been utilised in school and class rooms it is now necessary to erect side galleries in the chapel for the overflow of children from the schoolroom. These galleries will cost about £1000, towards which the congregation in a comparatively short time have already contributed £200 as a nucleus of the fund they hope to raise. The place of worship is attended by persons from all parts of St. Philip's, and even from distant suburbs of the city, and it is calculated that the work at Unity Chapel influences directly or indirectly 3000 persons; and even in this poor neighbourhood the annual expense of all this work is borne by the congregation without any outside aid. All the seats in the chapel are free, and the whole work offers a telling illustration of what can be accomplished by the voluntary system when well organised amongst an earnest and united people.



CHAPTER IX.

DOWN IN THE MARSH.

IT is said that "every light must have its shadow," and if St. Philip's, according to official reports of the death rate, is "running a race with Clifton as a health resort," socially it is wrapt in so deep a shade as to offer a grim and ghastly contrast to the sweetness and light of the fashionable suburb, with its clear and pure atmosphere, its broad carriage drives and park-like gardens, and the bright rays of social prosperity beneath which cheerful faces beam and mantle in every home in wealthy Clifton. "Down in the Marsh" brings us to a gloomy vale enshrouded in almost perpetual smoke—the site of the vast rubbish heap to which for many years have been brought the litter and lumber scavenged from all parts of the city—the chosen home of the manure manufactories, bone-crushing mills, knacker yards, horseflesh-boiling factories, and works which in the manufacture of chemical products throw off nauseous gases, causing stench-laden folds of air to envelop the visitor and make him involuntarily turn to the water side to try if he can breathe more freely. Innumerable small smoke stacks jerk out their filth-fumes, which sweep in thick clouds through the streets till darkness seems to set in around the Marsh and its neighbourhood half-an-hour before it does in more favoured parts of the city; while from giant chimneys, dimly seen through the soot-mist, pour volumes of smoke, completing the murky eclipse of the "lamp of day," and enveloping the whole place in an almost impenetrable stench-cloud. Who can wonder that the pulse of social life beats feebly in many of the homes of the poor in such a place, when the smut-thickened air seems enough to "snuff out all the mirth of their existence," or that strangers should liken it to a noisome sewer to which has been brought "the dregs and feculence of every land." It is truly a benighted—we had almost written a blighted—spot, and, beyond its inhabitants, none but the clergy and the ministers, the voluntary visitors to the homes of the poor, and the scripture reader and city missionary,

the relieving officer and school board agent, can feel the inexpressible weariness and mental depression which overpower all who spend much time amidst the poor people dwelling in the Marsh and the adjoining parts of St. Philip's. And yet beneath this dismal "coverlet of vapours and putrefactions" there live a poor, working, struggling population, with regard to many of whom, while they have not been able to get constant employment for years, their daily life-battle is fought under the hardest circumstances, sometimes without bread to eat; but their "bitter cry" is not heard till you knock at their door or follow to some bare room their half-naked children. As elsewhere, some of the worst cases are those of the improvident, but nearly everywhere the cry is for more work, and there are hundreds of poor labourers whose faces would brighten with joy and whose families would be thankful at the prospect of a few weeks full and regular employment. Again, it is true that visitors who have lived for years in mining districts in the North, while finding much greater real poverty here, state that women in several cases are addicted to drink more than in the mining districts, but, on the other hand, by far the majority of the women will work with almost heroic fortitude for their children, when the bread-winner is gone or has been struck down by permanent illness; and the greatest calamity that could befall them is the work-house.

During our week's visits we came upon cases in which women sometimes rise at half-past four in the morning and work till ten and eleven o'clock at night at trouser-making to support their children; others where women had gone without their breakfast in order that the children should have their meagre allowance. We saw entirely bare homes where nearly every article, including most of the clothes off the children's backs and the underclothing of the mother, had been sold or pledged for food, and no visitor unaccustomed to these sights could enter the home and

see the hungry look of the ragged little ones without sending for some bread. The collapse of large factories, throwing hundreds of workmen out of employ, seems to have specially told on the unfortunate labourer, who has never recovered from this crushing disaster. And the same might be said of some of the skilled workmen, who found themselves deprived of their situations at a time when advancing age made it difficult for them to secure a berth in another undertaking. In the courts more towards the middle of St. Philip's can be found Avonside Engine Works men who had held their situations for fifteen, twenty, thirty years, who are now lying worn-out, and, in one or two cases, dying, in wretched homes, one of which we shall have to describe in detail presently. But the extent of the poverty and misery of some of these homes, where nearly everything has been parted with for food, is almost beyond description. In one of these, a small two-roomed house let at 2s. 6d. per week, we entered with a relieving officer the down stair room, which was nearly bare of furniture. The children, whose mother was out looking for work, were ragged and most woe-begone in appearance. Going up to the little bedroom, a cheerless, dingy looking place with scarcely anything in it but the bedstead with its meagre coverlid, we found an Avonside Engine Works man, dying of asthma and bronchitis. His family expected he would have passed away in the night. He was still lingering in a sinking condition. We shall not soon forget the expression of hopeless misery, and the cold, almost bitter sternness with which the poor man, looking up from his wretched pallet, said "I thought I was going last night; I am tired of this world; I am going to die; and I don't care how soon." The cheerless surrounding of this death bed, of one who had toiled all his life in St. Philip's, seemed to focus into a fierce light and bring into startling relief in one telling picture all the sad scenes we had witnessed in too many of the joyless homes of the poor. We are not speaking now of any special want of sanitary measures. Most of the families, except in the Marsh, have two or three roomed houses to themselves, and the streets and nearly all the courts are pitched or paved. Though the place is dingy and grimy enough, the men are obliged to live near their work, and if all were fully or better employed the misery would be greatly lessened. But apart from all this there is a crying need of some elevating influence, some well organised up-lifting agency closely entering into their daily life—some nearer approach on the part of those identifying themselves with the improvement of the condition of the poor, to brighten the life which is at present so black and

so dull. In every district we enter we have proof of the great work being done amongst the children by the School Board and other improved means of elementary education. But something is required to be done for those above school age and the adults—some refining and instructive oft-recurring means of encouraging them to employ their leisure time to advantage. Some combined and organised effort between clergy and ministers and benevolent persons in different parishes might accomplish a great deal in this respect, especially if they resolved to work together in providing suitable buildings and the means of recreation for the people. A comprehensive inquiry as to the needs of such populous district could be followed by some "parochial hall" scheme, on the plan of the recent successful Church Extension Scheme. Indeed it would well and fittingly supplement it—as an ardent Christian worker remarked to us the other day:—"It is no use building more and more churches and chapels unless you take well devised means to draw the people to them by improving and brightening their homes, raising the tone of their every day habits, and getting a closer touch of their inner social life than you will ever get by simply throwing open the doors of new churches or chapels."

MARSH-TOWN IN ST. SILAS.

Marsh-town is the title we will venture to substitute for a very obnoxious name given in a curious way to the Marsh district of St. Silas—a name to this day indignantly repudiated by the inhabitants. We have already described the general appearance of the place. When portions of the ashes piled upon the chemical refuse in the Marsh land lying between the Feeder road and the river had been sufficiently levelled, streets of houses were rapidly constructed, and one builder, with a taste for ornament, finished off with a bit of carved work, in geometrical figures or scrolls in the freestone, and in a misguided moment, taking a still higher flight, he carved a monkey in relief at the corner house in Philip street. Work was more plentiful then, and the houses rapidly became filled, many of the people dishoused by the pulling down of old dwellings and rookeries in Temple street for the broad thoroughfare of Victoria street, selecting the cheap houses in the Marsh. Their friends, who visited them, proved most provokingly curious as to the origin of the freestone monkey, and as the residents failed to satisfy their inquiries, they maliciously associated it with the origin of the place itself, and christened it "Monkey town." The name quickly fixed itself to the Marsh, but the inhabitants became so incensed that eventually the owner of the

particular house found that if he did not himself remove the obnoxious figure, they were "going for that monkey." He chose the wiser course and removed it, but the place it occupied is still visible in the outlines on the freestone. The streets in Marsh-town—which has been the growth of about 15 years—are paved and channelled, and but for the smoke and the mingled stenches from the factories and the ever increasing ash heap, the houses, despite the rather unsavoury, as well as shifty foundation, would not be undesirable four and five-roomed dwellings for single families. But when some of the sugar works and other large industries collapsed in Bristol there came a time of great distress, and the poor people, giving up some of the houses, crowded together, two families in a house, to reduce the rent money. Out of about 1200 houses, with a population of 6400, in St. Silas, there are 103 houses vacant. In the Marsh section there are some few mechanics, but the majority of the men are labourers, some of them employed at neighbouring works, others as bargemen, and many only in casual employment. And in some of the streets the lack of work and the consequent poverty are distressing indeed. Many of the women go out to work. Some are employed at brick and tile making, some at the Cotton Factory, or in the city at clothes factories; others, with their children, can be seen rummaging the great ash heap, where the scavengers' carts tip the ashes and refuse of the city. They sometimes entirely supply their homes with fuel from the cinders gathered from the rubbish.

IN CHARGE OF THE TWINS.

One of the principal streets is, perhaps, the poorest of all, and here there are plenty of poverty stricken homes, and children with naked legs and bare feet are running about the street. But here is one little fellow toddling along the sidewalk uncertain of his tiny footsteps under the burden of only sixteen months and a very thin shirt. A clergyman, whom we are with, gratifies our wish by following the naked one to his home, a kind neighbour on the way picking up the Lilliputian traveller and carrying him into the house of a mechanic in partial work, whose wife helps the weekly income by going out to wash clothes. A girl of eleven, left in charge of five young ones, has gone on the ash tip to pick some more cinders, leaving a child of five, whom we will call Agnes, in charge of twins 16 months old, and a three year old child, and another. The task proved too heavy for Agnes, who, with pale and wan face already worn with weight of care, watches the travelling twin take his place close to the cinder fire, as with motherly care and affection she nestles in to the few rags covering her breast

twin No. 2, who is crying and cannot walk much yet, and is as naked as his wandering brother. The room is bare of furniture, it is in a filthy state, there is no fender to protect the children from the fire, and it is a marvel that the twin's flimsy travelling robe does not ignite. All the children are in rags, and the sight is most pitiable and touching beyond expression as the half-naked children huddle together for warmth dangerously close to the bars of the scanty firegrate in this blank and miserable home; while the encumbered child of five years, with self-sacrificing love and pity and tenderness, and all the gentle nature so winning in womankind, is anxiously soothing and fondly caressing her little twin-brother, Agnes, with her divided charge, is evidently comforted at the return of the lost one, and with a sweetness and dignity of look, far beyond her years, she silently conveys her thanks while still nestling her other charge. It is nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, but the children have had nothing to eat since breakfast. In reply to our question, Agnes conveys this information with a quiet shake of the head, and a momentary expression of sorrow, which speaks eloquently enough, passes across the child-guardian's face while she wistfully looks over the head of her charge as though at some distant object. When the neighbour consented to go and buy some food, the grave, dignified, unjoyous little face made no sign, but, as one left this home of the poor, he felt that with all its gaunt appearance and sordid surroundings, it had, at any rate, one tender ray of sunshine left to brighten its gloom. The kind neighbour who undertook the small commission to buy the food had a home almost as bare and dreary. She and her sister shared a house between them. Their husbands were bargemen, only getting work two or three days a week. One had six children, the other four. In the case of the former, one child of five only had a shirt to wear. The mother stated that while her husband was out of work for three months she had sold or pledged everything for food. She had no clothes in which to send the children to school. Twelve persons lived in this five-roomed house.

WANT OF WORK.

In another case of a bargeman his wife said he had only earned 8s. a week for the last 6 months. In a six-roomed house at 3s. 6d. a week, occupied by a labourer earning 10s. a week, with a wife and four children, one room is let to a labourer, wife, and three children at 1s. a week, and the five sleep in one bed; the husband, out of work, is away in Somersetshire looking for a job, and the wife sells a few fish and sometimes only obtains threepence in a day. Here is

a better though a very poor home in a street that was flooded out last October. A young labourer, thirty-four years old, out of work, has a wife and four little children, all of them tidily kept and fairly clothed and fed, though the home has been deprived of many of its comforts to procure food. The wife states that before her husband got out of work they had a most comfortable little home, but she had been obliged to pledge lots of the things, and during the past twelve months their home had been breaking up. They recently sold their bed and are now sleeping on the children's small bed, and they make up one for the children on the floor. The wife makes stays, and with the help of a machine can earn 7s. a week when she can get full work, but she is unable to get it always. Amongst a few pictures left on the walls is the husband's certificate of membership of a Foresters' court, but he states that not being ill when he lost his work and could not pay he got out of benefit. He had been a member, off and on, six years, and had now been out two years; but if he gets work he intends joining again, as there is now some provision by extra payment for meeting a case of this kind. A paper hanger, ill and only in partial work, earning sometimes 8s. a week, has wife and four children, but the wife earns a little by needle work, and they pay 3s. 3d. rent for a house to themselves, and they have a comfortable home in contrast to that of a neighbour in constant work with wife and seven children, who look pinched with hunger, while they are clothed in rags, and the home is most filthy and unwholesome. In another street several of the houses are closed, and others are occupied by some of the poorer people in partial work and their children half clad. A labourer, earning £1 a week, has brought up 16 children, of whom seven are now with him, together with a married son lately out of work, with his wife and three young children, making 14 in the house. It has been a hard struggle for the old people, but the kind-hearted woman bears up cheerfully under the difficulties, and her son has just got a place at 15s. a week. During the pressure the poor woman, her husband, and four children have had to sleep in one bed. In Grafton street, in a case where the husband died, the widow, with the aid of a sewing machine, materially helped to support her children till she, through want and overwork, undermined her constitution, and she is now too ill to do anything. In a five-roomed house at 4s. 6d. a week live two families—a bargeman, wife, and five children; a labourer, wife, and three children. Both men are only in partial work and the homes are very impoverished, and the women and children barely clad. The wife of the bargeman says he only earns from 5s.

to 10s. a week. When she had eight children at home in the good times when her husband got £1 a week and there was plenty of work doing, she was happy and comfortable; but she has parted with lots of her furniture since then, and instead of paying her way as she always used to she is often obliged to go in debt. She used to try to get back her household things, but she gave up trying, as she can hardly get clothes to wear now, and her dress confirms her statement.

SHOCKING HOME OF AN AVONSIDE WORKMAN.

Leaving the Marsh district, and threading the narrow streets and lanes past the Gas Works, we reach Cook's Gardens and Union Road at a point touched upon in the last chapter. Here in a fearfully squalid dwelling in a yard on the borders of two parishes—and apparently unknown to any parochial or benevolent agency, except the relieving officer, in a bed of filthy rags and shreds—compared with which the lair of straw of some prize animal at a cattle show would be a bed of down—is lingering a poor man who toiled 31 years of his life at the Avonside Engine Works. He was a labourer, working at the screwing machines in the boiler shop. And since the collapse of that undertaking, where about 1000 men were employed, he has been able to get very little work, and for some time he has been confined to his bed with a bronchial affection, which has brought him down to the lowest state. His wife goes out washing; and alone in the darkness of this miserable shed-dwelling he is left in sullen misery. The shanty consists of two small rooms, in the outer one of which there is some light, so that one can see an old mahogany chest of drawers and a few little pictures, with some broken china ornaments, the remains of household nicknacks of the good times. The place is begrimed with dust and dirt; but it is in the bedroom where the poor man is lying—a gloomy, dungeon-like place of about seven feet square—that we meet with a sight which but for the evidence of one's own eyes one could scarcely believe to exist in a city noted above all others for its Christian philanthropy, its works of charity at home, and its rich donors to missions abroad. The sour odour of dampness and long-accumulated dirt lying thick on the floor and coating the walls gives the visitor a sickening sensation as he enters. The light from a small window only 18 inches deep is barred by a dingy curtain, so that one cannot see across the few feet of space till we stand out of the light caused by the open door. Even then we can but dimly see the form of a human being turning in pain on the ragged tick of a bed,

from which the millpuff has long dropped out to mingle with the dust heaped on the floor beneath the bedstead. The meagre bedclothes which the invalid sullenly throws aside as he rouses himself to cough look black with the dust and grime of many months. The walls are damp, and the whole place looks like an underground cellar. Even with the door wide open, the light is not sufficient for one to see the man's features, and yet living in this dark and clammy den the poor creature is suffering from a severe bronchial affection, which frequently keeps him to his bed. While he was able to be about work was so scarce that his wife tells us they have gone back twelve months in the rent, which is 2s. per week; but the kind-hearted landlady, who was very good to them, had not pressed for it, and allowed them to remain. They are receiving relief during the man's illness, and the wife, when seriously advised to have her husband removed to the invalid ward at the Workhouse for a couple of months, appears reluctant to be separated from him for that short time, but promises to consider the matter.

COOK'S GARDENS AND THE NURSERY.

How the poor live in districts where illness or want of work brings destitution is little known except to themselves. We commence our morning's visit with a conversation with an old lady of "three score and nineteen," who has just been to purchase meat for the day's dinner. It has only cost her one penny, and consists of tinned corned-beef scraps, wrapped in half a sheet of note paper. She says it is very good indeed, and the old soul is cheerful and contented. In the neighbourhood of Cook's Gardens, Barton Vale, and Tyler's Fields, and adjoining lanes and courts, there is much real destitution, with some homes of squalor and misery. Most of these places look gloomy enough now with the open spaces, which were once bright little gardens, turned into waste ground for ashes and refuse, fowls' houses and the donkey stables of the costermongers; with the once trim walls soot-begrimed, fissured, furrowed, and so dilapidated that they are tumbling down. One matronly-looking lady who has brought up a family of six children in this locality has lived there thirty years, and has a model little home and a pattern garden with wall flowers, sweet Williams, and pinks and carnations, but such a taste is considered so out of harmony with the neighbourhood that the matron is looked upon as an eccentric if not a superior person—and she is locally known as Lady ——. She tells us that in the old days, when business was brisk in Bristol, and the houses there were chiefly occupied by mechanics, there were some beautiful gar-

dens full of flowers, and the wives of the workmen used to rival one another in growing blooms in their windows. Her husband never had more than 18s. a week, but she always kept a comfortable home, and after having shown us a bright little kitchen, she took a pride in introducing us to the parlour, a miniature drawing-room, carpeted, papered, pictured, and natively furnished. It had a gas pendant and globe, every chair was covered with crochet work antimacassars, large prints of Scriptural subjects adorned the walls, with large portraits of "Lady ——" and her good husband. He, however, has known the luxury of constant work—denied the many hundreds of working men in St. Philip's. Here is the case of a poor widow with seven children, three of whom are able to do a little for their living, but at Christmas time, when one factory stopped for a week, she scarcely knew how to get food day by day, though she worked hard herself at the wash tub, and says the struggle to get food for the little ones at times almost drives her out of her mind. In one five-roomed house a labourer, in work, his wife and five children. The wife helps the income by staymaking, at from 2s. to 3s. per dozen, and she sometimes, by working from six in the morning till eight at night, earns 5s. or 6s. per week, and is able to keep a good home. Some four-roomed houses in the neighbourhood that 30 years ago let at 2s 10d. per week, are now fetching 4s. 6d. A widow, with four children, has lodging with her a young woman who gets her living by staymaking, and she tells us that by working hard from half-past six or seven in the morning till eight or nine o'clock at night, she can sometimes earn 7s. 6d. a week, out of of which she has to find her own cotton and machine. A labourer, in partial work, lives with his wife and six children in a two-roomed house at 2s 6d. a week. He earns about 14s. or 16s. a week when in full work, but his wife states he has not done a full week's work for two years. He hardly gets 10s., and last week he only earned 3s.; and the children have to live on bread or sop. He is a steady man, does not drink, and goes without tobacco; they can scarcely get enough clothes to cover the children, who, even under these conditions of severe destitution, show that they are cared for. They are naturally healthy, but want more food. The rooms are about seven feet square, and this family of eight occupy one bedroom. Masons and masons' labourers are amongst those who have the hardest time of it in the winter months, and we find many of these in the poorer districts of two and three roomed houses. Here is a man in partial work, with wife and four children, one of whom has been suffering from lock-jaw, and has just returned from the hospital.

Another, seven years of age, run over by a trolley, has been in the Infirmary 16 weeks. Of twins born three months ago, one has died and the other, a very ill and emaciated little thing, is cradled in a rough sugar box, placed on the floor near the fire. The mother is ill and under the doctor, the rooms are almost bare, and this home of illness and want is one of gloom, abject misery, and severe trial. In the same neighbourhood are small houses with windows wrecked and boarded up or plugged with rags. A large part of Tyler's Fields offers numerous instances of poverty-stricken homes. A shoemaker, suffering from consumption, and unable to earn more than a shilling or two a week, has a wife and four children: the oldest of whom, 14 years of age, earns 1s. a week at service. The wife earns 5s. a week by working and charring, and though the husband has been ill four years the home is kept clean and tidy. One enterprising labourer, giving 4s. a week for four rooms, has gone into Cornwall to work at 18s. a week, and is able to send home a weekly sum, while his eldest daughter earns 3s. 6d. and his boy of fourteen 4s. a week. The youngest child is only seven weeks old, but the wife is able to keep the home well together. In another case, a labourer laid up with bronchitis, has a wife and four children, who similarly give substantial help to the maintenance of a very poor home. Painters' labourers are sadly off, and we find some of them living in very grimy homes, in alleys and courts, where a little paint would effect a wholesome change in the appearance of the houses, whose windows are coated with dust, the walls are dirty, and the floors broken and rotting; but only 2s. 8d. per week is paid for these houses.

The name of "The Nursery," given to a lot of courts and small squares of houses approached by a very narrow passage way off Kingsland road, suggests what the place was some forty years ago, when it was covered with richly productive gardens and orchards, well stocked with fruit trees. Hidden away behind the courts and yards and little squares of houses there is still a piece of the original nursery left, and where a gas stoker grows vegetables—cabbages, onions, radishes, and small salad, and keeps quite a "chicken farm" in the heart of St. Philip's. All the trees have been smoke-nipt and have disappeared long ago, but we are told that good vegetables are grown there. The "farm" is of considerable size, and the house and outbuildings are within the walled grounds, while near them are some cottages, with further strips of the nursery, with an old well and draw-bucket in one of the gardens. The place does not look so grimy as some parts of St. Philip's, and some of the houses in the courts look neat and trim, but the whole neigh-

bourhood seems half buried out of existence, and has a sleepy, slumber-hushed look, and the small two-roomed houses are mostly occupied by old people. The rents range from 1s. 9d. to 2s. a week. Here is one house tenanted by an old man and his wife, the latter an invalid, who has "kept her bed 21 years." The bed is in the downstairs room, where the old people seem to live and sleep. They are in receipt of out-relief. Close by is a sad case of a young girl about twenty years of age, who has been confined to her bed by partial paralysis for seven years. She is under the care of her aged mother, who takes a pride in keeping her little home as "clean as a new pin," and a model cottage hospital could not boast greater cleanliness or more snow white clothes. Here is another case of a broken-down A'onside Engine Works' man, who was a fitter, earning substantial wages in the old days. He was employed there 21 years, and is now beyond work. He has still three children home, and his wife works hard to support them—the poor woman rising sometimes at half-past four o'clock in the morning, and working till ten or eleven o'clock at night at cord trousers making, for which she gets 7½d. a pair. Off Kingsland road there are three or four wretched cottages unupaved, and with the floors of the houses below the road level, but they are gradually being deserted, and in one we found that those "homes of the poor" had recently been turned into stables for donkeys and ponies—a far more fitting use for them. In one of them live a labourer out of work, his wife, and three children, two of the latter being twins, 14 months old. They only have one bedroom, about 8ft. wide, and the rent is 1s. 9d. a week.

SAD DESTITUTION.

Big-sounding names of Oxford row and Victoria place are given to puny houses of two rooms rented at 2s. 3d. per week by the poorest people, some of them living on the very borders of starvation and in bare rooms. Here is a sad story of a labourer suffering from lung disease, and scarcely able to do any work. He has a wife and seven children, the youngest a baby six months old. The poor woman, looking round her desolate home, says, "We have been getting rid of something every day for food. We had three little beds, but we parted with the bed-clothes last week, and yesterday I was obliged to sell the children's clothes, leaving one of them with only one thin garment, and the others scarcely got anything now. It seems to get worse and worse every day, instead of better. Some people at the factory gave my husband a glass of beer yesterday, and he drank it, thinking it might do him good, but it only made

his chest worse." The poor creature here fairly breaks down, and, as she nestles to her breast the infant, wrapped in a bit of dirty ragged cloth, she says bitterly, "I'm afraid it will drive me out of my mind sometimes." The six half-naked children crowd round the small fire. A table, a broken chair, and an old pan and two or three cups and saucers are the only articles left in the living room, and the unfortunate wife herself is hut scantily clothed. Another labourer living in a two-roomed cottage at 2s. per week has a wife and five children. He has bad eyesight and has only earned 3s. in five weeks. The wife says she hardly knows how she shall send the children to the Board School after the holidays as they hardly have any clothes. She has sold nearly everything but one bed, which is all that is left for herself, husband, and five children. But for the kindness of neighbours they would sometimes have no food all day. The living room is only six feet by eight feet, and the bedroom about the same. In the neighbourhood of the Gas Works there are courts with similar cases of destitution in most impoverished homes. One labourer's wife, who says that since her marriage they have changed their home eleven times, rejoices that her husband has now got three days work a week, as he has only been getting two or three days in three weeks. She and the children have sometimes been nearly starving when he has been away looking for work, and they have sold all their furniture, and one week in December they went two days with only one loaf of bread. In another case of a labourer out of work the children get fed, but only by the wife working from half-past five in the morning till half-past five at night in a factory. In other cases the children go out to work and earn the food for the family where the husband is out of employment. In one court of wretched houses and squalid homes a hawker's family of five children are well fed through the wife working at a rag factory, but the children are in rags and the home is in a shocking condition. The only one-roomed shanty we found in this part of St. Philip's was a dreary looking place occupied at 1s. 7d. per week by a hawker of salt, his wife working at a tile yard in the Marsh,

and one daughter aged 11. The old man, partly a cripple, is unable to do much, but his one room is quite a "curiosity shop," crowded with all sorts of odds and ends gathered in his travels.

An interesting incident during the week we visited St. Silas was the free distribution of 400 quarts of soup from the St. Silas Schools. When the vicar, the Rev. W. Saunders, recovered from his prolonged illness and returned to the parish, he gave £50 towards building a soup kitchen as a thankoffering for his recovery. The need of the poor was, however, so pressing that he gladly accepted the kind offer of the Rev. Dr. Doudney to supply two days a week, at cost price, 200 quarts of excellent soup from the St. Luke's soup kitchen, and the money is thus being spent this winter instead of expending it in bricks and mortar. The hot soup is brought in huge tins to the yard of St. Silas Schools. Two hundred quarts are distributed to the poor of one-half of the parish on Wednesdays and the other half on Saturdays, the children fetching it in pitchers and washhand jugs, and receiving quantities regulated by the number in family. The vicar hopes that in some form or other a soup kitchen will be a permanent institution of St. Silas. As is well known, the church situated in the Marsh, after its erection through the generous gifts of Mr. J. S. Harford and the late Mr. T. H. Hill (£1000) and other citizens, was found to be subsidizing owing to the treacherous foundation. A liberal response was made to Mr. Saunders's appeal, and the church was entirely rebuilt at a cost of £3000, Mr. Francis Fox, C.E., of Alpenfels, Leigh Woods, kindly superintending the whole work; and a handsome bequest from the late Mr. T. H. Hill released the new building from any liability that remained. It accommodates 800 persons; the day schools adjoining were built for 700 children, and increased accommodation is now required for the boys. A great deal of visiting the poor is accomplished, and a Scripture reader is constantly employed. The population is also reached by several Nonconformist communities, but the district is very large and scattered, while the people number between six and seven thousand.



CHAPTER X.

TUMBLEDOWN TEMPLE.

POOR old Temple. So much has been said in the past of its vice and immorality, its crime and its want, that we expected to find it in a "parlous state," like the shepherd who, Touchstone found, had never been to Court. An ancient city worthy was once so impressed with its social darkness and terrible depravity that he specially bequeathed a sum, the interest of which, amounting to £2 10s. per year, was to be given for an annual sermon against vice and immorality to be preached in the parish. But the wicked waxed strong in the old days, and no one accepting the challenge against their sullen defiance of the laws, the money got into the limbo of Chancery; and we believe it was reserved for the present vicar to claim it on the ground that he preached a sermon against vice and immorality every Sunday in Temple. It was found there was no withstanding this practical argument, and the vicar succeeded in obtaining the money for the spiritual good of Temple. How far the £2 10s. has been a factor in the regeneration of the parish we cannot say; but after visiting every part of it we certainly found it less black than, within our memory, it has been painted—though there is still overcrowding, distress, improvidence, and much poverty within its borders. Physically, also, it would be well if it were born again, for many parts of it are literally tumbling down. The church tower itself leans over fully five feet, so that one intuitively looks up with caution and fear to its overhanging parapet as he walks past its base. And a large part of the parish—centuries old—seems to be faithfully following in the footsteps of the church, and to be leaning too. Old age has overtaken it, and it is breaking up and becoming dismembered—it is blistered, and blotched, and propped, and crutched—it is out at elbows, and crack and limp; and its thread-bare outer coating in many places is frayed, and torn, and broken, and hanging in tag-rags. Many parts of it, too, apart from its regularly-endowed almshouses, form the refuge of aged people, some of

them nearly a century old. You can any day have a chat and gossip there with old "Templars" who have played in the meadows on the site of the present Joliet Station a quarter of a century before the Great Western Railway was built, and have walked through the city gates into the fields across the green turf before it was excavated for the artificial bed of the river now known as the New Cut. Some of these old people of eighty and ninety years, linking the present with a bygone age, fortunately seem to be so well looked after in Temple—the weekly allowance of relief being supplemented with gifts from the vestry or the clergy through Scripture-readers or Bible-women—that their days are "dwindling to their shortest span" placidly enough, though we question whether they could say with the lucky inmates of some richly-endowed almshouse, or with King Gama in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Castle Adamant"—

They tickle my tastes, they feed my fads;
They give me this, they give me that;
And I've nothing whatever to grumble at.

One of them complained to us that "she could not step into the fields, like she used to in her younger days, a few hundred yards from her house!" She only had to go out of the big gate and up Radcli' Mead lane and there she was, "in the fields at the top". This old lady, who has lived 95 years in Temple, has brought up a family of twelve children there, and is living in a comfortable four-roomed house with a married son who has five children. She remembers the time when there was a large tree still growing in the middle of Avon street, and when the large houses there were inhabited by wealthy traders and merchant captains. But, if we are to credit the old lady's knowledge of modern Temple, the people, like the church and the houses, want something to lean against, for "they are all poor now." Poverty and pauperism, in fact, seem almost indigenous in

Temple. With its reduced population of 3764 and 667 inhabited houses on its 83 acres, it has no fewer than 261 persons (of whom 96 are children) in receipt of relief. In other words, one out of every 14 of the resident population, according to the statistics at St. Peter's Hospital, has relief from the poor rate. This is a rather startling proportion, though Poor-law officials of advanced views are of opinion that the proportion should always be judged more by rateable value than by population, especially in a place where many of the daily workers live elsewhere. In St. Paul's it is one in 38, in St. Augustine's one in 40, and in St. Michael's one in 71. The parish where the great Edward Colston was born must at one time have made rapid strides on the downward path. It was the great centre of the cloth trade, as testified by the Weavers' Hall and Chapel—the latter forming the north side of the chancel of the parish church—and the shuttles and other weavers' emblems on the ancient tombstones. The cloth was sold at the Temple Fair, held in the Great Gardens, frequented by merchants from all parts of the country; and one old lady, a freeman's widow of 75, tells us that she took her daughter (now 46 years of age) to the last of these nine-days' fairs. The famous pottery established by Richard Frank, the Bristol delf-potter, removed from Redcliff back, was permanently established in Temple in 1777, and is now the Bristol Pottery. The more modern railway undertakings, with their stations and locomotive engine works, the stoneware potteries of Messrs. Price and Messrs. Powell and Sons, and, more than all, the colossal sugar refinery of Messrs. Finzel, caused every house erected in the parish to be crowded. In those early days, too, and even down to a late period, its narrow lanes and crooked alleys, its low-arched and cavernous-looking courts, intersected with dark passages and back entrances to roomy old houses, were accredited with sheltering gangs of thieves, who prowled the city at night, returning with plunder, which, till it could be melted down, was concealed in the roomy spaces beneath headstones over the graves in the old churchyard, where, even within the last twelve years, portions of silverplate have been discovered. Many a city robbery is said to have been concocted in the quaint, thick-walled, low-roofed kitchens of some of the houses which we entered, and we were shown one long alley where within the last fifteen years nearly every house on one side of it was a place of ill fame, where the thieves after a short rest from their night's depredations would "hasten to get drunk—the business of the day." Even in 1874 the present vicar started a meeting of the Scripture

Readers' Association, at the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, by describing the condition of his parish and the over-crowded state of the dwellings, and he gave an instance of four children and four adults sleeping in one bedroom, and spoke of the low tone of morality where its most elementary conditions were wanting. Mr. Davies, the Medical Officer of Health, at that time replying to a letter of the vicar, while denying that the Sanitary Authority were to blame or that they could interfere, admitted that he considered the subject of procuring more houses for the working classes "a most important one, that could not long be deferred without danger to the community." For a few years after that the speculating builder had his fling in the suburbs, and the construction of Victoria street, cutting through rookeries and courts, swept away some of the worst of the places, and let such wholesome light into others that Temple benefited largely by this important street improvement, and the over-crowding was materially lessened; and the clergy now believe there is not an openly carried-on house of ill fame in the parish. The broad new thoroughfare literally put a new face on Old Temple, and hundreds of the dishoused inhabitants sought places in the suburbs or down in the Marsh. Masked by this new face, however, there are still the old tumble-down houses and courts of which the parish was so full, and in some cases the "mask" is hardly more than "skin deep," and so roughly have the modern fronts of many styled architecture been interwoven with the old buildings, that passing beneath a decorated arch on the street front the visitor at once finds himself in one of the narrow and crooked old courts in the midst of dingy ram-shackle houses—this patchwork medley of the new and the old suggesting the epigrammatic lines once written on a frugal church improvement scheme:—

They built the front, upon my word,
As fine as any Abbey;
But, thinking they might cheat the Lord,
They left the back part shabby.

The time is not far distant when there will have to be a further sweeping off of some of these old courts. There are disused, old tumble-down buildings now in Temple which would offer a site for a parish hall for entertainments and recreation for the people—some means within ready and easy access of the family, when the husband gets into work and feels able to spend a little in some small pleasure. That there is a growing feeling as to a want of this is evident. And Temple, with all its excellent mothers' meetings, its Sunday and weekly classes, its provident clothing clubs, temperance societies, penny banks, and ragged

schools, appears to have nothing of the kind. To the absence of well ordered recreation for the people much evil may be attributed. We have a striking instance before us in which a labourer, with wife and six children, the youngest about 18 months' old, had no work all last week up to Wednesday, and only two days' work the week before. The house was very bare, and the children scarcely had bread to eat. In the bare room two of the poor little ones were sitting, dull, melancholy, and unanimated, gazing into the fire. The husband said he had no food, and he was grateful for a ticket for a 4lb. loaf; yet in this very case, so close to the border line of starvation, when the man recently got one full week's work, he and his wife revelled in a drinking bout—their only idea of a little pleasurable relaxation ready at hand. There is much sound reasoning in Lady Greville's remark in her interesting article in the *Fortnightly Review*:—"What we principally need is a general recognition of the fact that pleasure is a moral duty, and as necessary to man's perfect and wholesome development as work; coupled with this a stronger public opinion, which must create the desire to promote all innocent recreation, and to organise a scheme of amusement by which people can be taught what is pleasure, how to get, and how to value it." A most desirable improvement has certainly been made by turning Temple churchyard into a garden, throwing down the unsightly walls, opening the garden to view, and inviting adults, and particularly the aged people to enter and enjoy it. This is excellent in its way, but something more is needed, especially for the young, whose "surplus buoyancy" under ordinary conditions of a well-nourished body, will not be satisfied even with the beautiful churchyard garden, where they "walk to measure and with gravity sit." A certain class will seek pleasure of a more positive and active, rather than of a passive and negative kind, and if it is not provided within easy reach, they take the shortest cut to the first means of excitement at hand.

A CRUSHING BLOW.

Probably the greatest disaster that ever befell the poor of Temple was the collapse of the colossal undertaking of Messrs. Finzel in 1879-80. Absorbing many smaller manufactories of the kind, the Counterslip Refinery constantly extended its buildings till it covered an immense space abutting on the river. Indirectly associated with it were cooperages and warehouses employing hundreds of busy toilers. It was a vast hive of industry where, summer and winter, the sweets of labour, without care, blessed hundreds of homes. It had 25 steam boilers—

directly employed between 600 and 800 men—could turn out 1200 tons of sugar a week, and was estimated to more or less influence the every day life and welfare of between 2000 and 3000 people. The raw material brought to the quays of the harbour gave employment to numerous labourers, and contributed materially to the shipping dues of the ancient port, and thousands of tons of coal were annually barged to the works. Gradually the trade fell off, and sorrow and suffering were carried into hundreds of homes when the news of the crash came, and the doors of the great industrial hive were eventually closed. The magnitude of the disaster was felt by the whole city, and it would be difficult to over-estimate the sad poverty and dire misery which followed—especially amongst the great army of the poor in Temple. Some removed elsewhere; many of the houses that were full and overcrowded in every court and alley became untenanted; large warehouses were left idle and blank; property depreciated in value; and to this day the very poor in Temple have not recovered the crushing blow which left them dazed, helpless, and impoverished. Other causes combined with this tended to materially reduce the population, which at one time was said to have been over 5000. In 1871 it was 4400. It is now about 3700. Looking at the exceptionally large number of old people there would be probably 1000 families, and of these it is computed that nearly 400 persons are not regularly or fully employed—labourers with very precarious means, eked out by temporary assistance, or by the help of their wives and children working at stay making, paper bag making, sack mending, or employed at potteries, pipe factories, rag sorting, stick chopping, or trouser making. Of some sixty or eighty "homes of the poor" which we visited in one week in Temple there were scarcely a dozen in which the bread winners were fully employed, and in many cases they only got one or two days a week. Here is a sad case of a sugar refinery workman who was employed at Counterslip nearly a quarter of a century till the works stopped, and subsequently with the new company there till they ceased working, and he was the last man to leave the old place. He had had a most comfortable home, where he and his wife, being without children themselves, had brought up orphan children of their relatives, and two of these children they have with them now, in a little house where they have what is left of the wreck of their home. The poor woman is much affected as she tells of the sacrifice of many of her things, and of her husband's fruitless efforts to get work having so preyed upon him that his sight is slightly impaired. He had 22 years' good character but he has been quite unable

to get constant work, and since June, 1881, by the casual employment obtained he has not earned more than 5s. a week. His impaired sight only interferes with his reading or writing, and he is anxious to get work and would gladly take any place as labourer. He has searched everywhere for work, and says he thinks a labour registration for men similar to those in existence for women would be highly advantageous.

CROWDED AND STIFLING HOMES.

Though the tenement houses in Temple are not so crowded as they were, there are, both in these and the small dwellings, some wretched homes mostly of labourers out of work. Here is case 53 on our notebook—A quay labourer, with wife, three children, and his aged father, rents, at 2s. 6d. a week, three rooms on one floor of a tenement house. It is an ancient house, and the three rooms run from front to back. The old man (81 years) lives in the one at the back, and is in receipt of relief; the place is bare enough, the grate falling to pieces, and the poor pallet is a sorry affair with a bit of sacking for the bed. But this is sweetness and light compared with the bedroom of the husband, wife, and three children. This room is situated midway between the old man's room and the front living-room, from which it is entered, and it has no means of light or ventilation except from a hole cut in the door and a couple of panes of glass inserted high in the wood partition separating it from the old man's room. It is, consequently, in darkness even in the daytime, and looking into this sleeping-place for five people is like looking down a well. The labourer is only in partial work, but earns on the average 10s. The wife, looking round her bare home, says, "We had two beautiful rooms of furniture once in Temple street, but since the work has been so slack, we have had to get rid of the goods and our clothes." The children look well cared for, even under these trying conditions. In another six-roomed house, there live in a garret a fitter out of work, and his two sons; in the next room, baker out of work and his wife; in the next, an old woman; and in the three down-stair rooms a workman, his wife, and three children, the latter in better circumstances. This is a far better condition of things than the next case in an old court off Church street, where is a four-roomed house, rented by a quay labourer, his wife, and four children, at 4s. a week. The top room is so shaky with age, and the ceiling so low, that the poor woman tells us they are afraid to use it for fear the ceiling will come in upon them, they let out the middle room to a man and his son, and reserve two rooms for themselves, the six occupying one bedroom,

and the oldest girl, who earns 4s. a week, is 16 years of age. The wife obtains a little by washing, as her husband has not had three or four days' work a week for the last twelve months, and she thinks herself lucky to get 10s. in one week, sometimes she only gets 3s. In another court, where the houses are damp, a bargeman, in partial work, with his wife and four children, pays 2s. 6d. for a two-roomed house, with one bedroom for the six, the eldest son being 18 years of age. The latter works at a pottery. The home is bare, and the furniture scanty enough. This is one of the poorest courts, and the homes have little signs of comfort or anything to lift the inmates beyond the direst drudgery—the struggle to live. In one of these two-roomed houses live a labourer in full work at 18s. a week, but he was ill last year for nearly six months; he has a wife and three children, and pays 7d. a week for the latter's schooling. They all sleep in one room, and the place is very bare. In another we found a widow with five children, the mother working at trouser-making at 7d. a pair. Her sister, also a widow with five children, occupies an adjoining house, and the sisters join partnership, and when they get plenty of work they can make eighteen pairs of trousers in a week between them; but work has been short, and their present parcel is the first they have had this year. Here is the case of a labourer out of work, his wife and one child living in a bare room, for which they pay 1s. 4d. per week. For the last three months the man has only earned 4s. a week, and they have had to part with nearly everything—even to the counterpanes and sheets from their one bed. The wife sorrowfully says, "We used to have a little house to ourselves, but since work has been so slack on the Quay we have been obliged to sell nearly all we had for food, and to live in one room." The husband, a strong, able man, tells us he would be glad to get a situation at 12s. or 15s. a week. In a three-roomed cottage, the lower apartment of which is used as a cellar, live a family of sick choppers—husband (a cripple), wife, and five children. They have a donkey and cart, and the eldest boy (14) goes out with his father to sell the wood. They pay 3s. a week for the cottage, and 1s. for a shed for the donkey, but the family of seven sleep in one room. There is plenty of crowding to this extent in the poorest places of Temple, especially in some of the smallest houses of the old courts. In one of these—a damp and still dirty place near Temple back, where there have been in the past several cases of scarlet fever—there is much suffering through want of work. In one two-roomed house, let at 2s. a week, the stone floor is very damp, yet the labourer occupying the place is

suffering from bronchitis, and has not done any work for three weeks. In another, a labourer in partial work, has a wife and four children, aged from 15 years to six, the eldest girl earning 4s. a week at a factory. They pay 2s. 6d. a week for the two rooms, about 7ft. by 9ft., and they only have one bedroom for the six persons. The rooms are wretchedly small, but in the next house the wife of a labourer, who is ill and does little work, tells us she has two beds in her small room. The poor woman appears to consider the provision of the two beds a luxury, but she has six children under fourteen, and the eight persons have to sleep in that small bedroom. She says, "I do a little washing, but we sometimes got to go all the week, and Sunday, too, with only bread; its very hard these last two winters; but I hope 'twill be better soon." The children are fairly fed, but are clothed in rags and old pieces of sacking, and the home, despite a few old pictures on the walls, is gloomy, miserable, and cheerless. We must give one other case in this grimy court, which, like several of the most sordid slums of this earth, has, with a grim irony, borrowed its title from Heaven. It is that of a labourer who has taken to hawking things about the streets, but the wet weather has interfered with the sale of his "special line," and he is home minding the babies while his wife is out charing. He has four children, and the six sleep in one small bedroom, and if that room is anything like the downstairs room—about 8ft. by 7ft.—it must be stifling indeed. The fumes of the coke fire and the stench of accumulated dust and dirt on unwashed clothes were almost suffocating, and we were glad to stand in the doorway to get a little of the outer air, while a pretty-faced little boy took the crying baby from a box and handed it to his father, who told us that he and his missus could hardly earn dry bread for the children this winter.

Amongst further illustrations of crowding we may give the following:—In a low-roofed one-floor cabin of two rooms, let at 2s. 8½d. a week, live a chair maker and wife and four children. The place is damp; one infant is only three weeks old, and the six persons sleep in a room which scarcely looks 7ft. square. In a court already referred to live a labourer in partial work, his wife, who goes out washing, and six children under 14, the eldest of whom is permitted by the School Board to remain home to mind the little ones while both parents are out working or seeking work. The children are clothed in rags, the home is almost desolate, and with only two rooms. There is only one bedroom for the family of eight. In an adjoining house, with only one bedroom, a bright little woman, bustling about her domestic duties with a

lightheartedness which suggests that her husband is in full work, volunteers the information that her family for the single bedroom numbers six; and, with a quick sense of humour, she adds, "and the cat makes seven." There are many instances of families of six sleeping in one bedroom, and in one of these cases the observation of the landlord that "he wished the Corporation would take it off his hands again," implied that it was leased for a term of years and sublet. A potter, his wife, and four children occupied a two-roomed cottage, upon the possession of which they had only just entered at 2s. 9d. a week. The landlord was knocking at the door for his rent, but only the children were at home. The outgoing family, a mechanic with wife and four children, had gone twenty weeks without paying any rent. The man earned 30s. a week when he did not drink; but when the landlord put the bailiffs in "possession" they found that there was literally nothing to seize, the rooms being bare of furniture, and the landlord was glad to get rid of his unprofitable tenant at any price. Here is a case of a small six-roomed house where a labourer with wife and five children occupy two rooms at 2s. a week, two other rooms being rented by a labourer and his wife and three children, and two more by a man and wife. The labourer's five children are all under 13 years of age. The last week he had only earned 6s. 6d., and for a fortnight after Christmas he earned nothing, and all the clothing except what the children and parents were wearing were sold or pledged. There are numerous instances of this kind where the family once having got rid of everything but "what they stand upright in," have lost one of the primary conditions of cleanliness—the possibility of a change of clothing.

WANT OF WORK.

In few places have we met with more complaints of the scarcity of work for labourers than in Temple. We could enumerate dozens of cases. Here is one, a cattle drover, who has been out of work since the market has been closed to the neighbouring counties, and his wife, who does a little shoe-binding, says last winter and this have been the most trying they have ever known. They are living in one of the two-roomed low-roofed old houses in a dim court, where the windows of several of the houses are broken. In another of these houses live a quay labourer, his wife, and three children, and they pay 2s. 3d. per week for the house. The husband did not earn anything last week, clothes and furniture have gone for food, and the poor children have scarcely more than one article of clothing each. A quay labourer, out of work, tells us he can scarcely get one day's work a week

now, though he gets up at six o'clock every morning, and goes round the quays looking for employment: he says that he often finds as many as 100 labourers offering their services for the discharge of a single ship. In an old, roomy, six-roomed house in a court live three families—a jobbing gardener, wife, and five children; a labourer, wife, and five children; and an old couple. The gardener, who pays 1s. 9d. a week for two rooms, only earned 2s. 6d. last week; most of their goods has gone for food, and but for a little work done by the wife the children would scarcely have bread to eat. The labourer has been out of work, but is now earning 12s. a week. A painter, with wife and five children under thirteen years, has not had any work for four weeks, and has been obliged to part with his furniture for food. He pays 3s. 6d. for a three-roomed house and lets one room for 15d., but has a large bedroom for himself, wife, and five children. Another painter with a wife and six children has just had one week's work after several weeks of enforced idleness; but his home is evidently well managed, and though these poor people have to pay 4s. a week for a three-roomed house they are making a brave struggle against the hard times. We have already supplied numerous other proofs of want of work in the crowded homes described above.

SQUALOR AND MISERY.

Much of the actual squalor of Temple disappeared with the demolition of the old houses for the construction of Victoria street, but there is still some left. Only a few weeks ago one court, in which after the first house there was scarcely a dwelling but what had its windows smashed in, was cleared of its worst occupants by the landlord, after fruitless efforts to get his rent from them. These people, however, have only moved to other places in the parish, where their squalor, like an infectious fever, taints their new home. We follow the track of one of these families—a labourer, with wife and five children—and find them in a narrow court near Avon street. It is already filthy, bare, and most miserable. The only articles of furniture in the lower room are the half of a cane chair, placed across a bucket, and a bench for a table. A poor, raggedly-clad boy of 13 is nursing the baby, which he says is 18 months old, but it is so shrunken and small that it looks only eight or ten months. Its face is black with dirt, and it only has one dirty old frock to cover it. Two other little ones, begrimed with dirt, crouch beneath the bench or table, and the boy nurse left home to mind the children looks wearied and miserable. Both parents are out. The hapless lot of these little ones

is enough to awaken anyone's pity and sorrow; and if their lives are to be moulded and trained and formed by the daily monotony, dulness, and dirt of this home, there is little wonder that pauperism sticks to such places. One can scarcely believe such a state of things could long bear the daylight of a big thoroughfare, as these grossly-neglected homes will nearly always be found skulking in a court fronted with a welcome screen of dead wall. Our companion tells us of another case where he found that a woman—given to drink—had turned out the millpuff from the bed and sold the tick to satisfy her craving for stimulant. In another two-roomed house, occupied by a labourer, his wife, and five children, we find in the living room only a chair and table, and the place looks almost as miserable as the one just described. Both parents are out, three of the children are at school—thanks to the Act enforcing compulsory education—and a girl of ten is left in charge of a baby. We found many homes almost bare of furniture, but not so squalid as these. Here is the case of a poor woman who, separated from her husband, has a very scanty home, consisting of two rooms, at 2s. a week. She has two daughters, one of whom has helped her, but is now out of a place, and the girls had nothing to eat all day till the mother came home in the afternoon with a few coppers which she had earned. In this house of penury and destitution there was not the squalor of the neglected homes of which we have just spoken.

THE STRUGGLING POOR.

The sick and the aged, the halt and the blind, contribute largely to Temple's relief list, and no one can visit the homes of the poor there without coming to the conclusion that the people are a hard-working, struggling community anxious to earn their livelihood. Here are a few illustrative cases. A poor man, totally blind, and his wife, both between 50 and 60 years of age, occupy a cottage, attached to which is a cartshed. The man earns a living by chopping hoops for firewood and selling it to shopkeepers at the rate of 72 bundles for a shilling! Though blind, the old man chops the hoops himself, and his patience is marvellous. Seated on a chump in front of his chopping block he takes a hoop, first feels for any nails, pinches them out with a pair of tweezers, then, placing the hoop on the chopping block, he carefully feels for the requisite length, and chops it off with unerring accuracy. His wife ties the bundles by a patent contrivance handed down in the family, and these old people have a comfortable little home, thanks to their industry. For 2s. 10d. per week a

labourer has a three-roomed house; his earnings are 15s. a week, and with a wife and five children, one of whom assists in the income, he keeps a good, well-ordered home. An old woman of 75 is a ragpicker; she pays 1s. 7d. per week for a two-roomed house, in the lower room of which she has an endless stock of "unconsidered trifles"—pictures, old prints, cracked ornaments, and china, in which she appears quite a connoisseur. The place smells musty, but the old soul says she is very comfortable, and never has a day's illness. In another place, a very old lady, who has been bedridden ten months, is partly supported by her daughter and husband. They have two children, and the husband is in partial work, but his wife is very industrious, and fills up all her spare time by making spills for hotels. she gets 8d. for a dozen bundles, and its takes her several hours to earn two shillings. A labourer, who has become blind and deaf, has a wife and seven children, one of whom is at service. The wife earns 7s. or 8s. a week at pipemaking. The man has learnt to read by means of the alphabet for the blind, and he has a neatly-kept though very poor home in a quaint little court, where most of the people are scrupulously clean in their habits. A labourer, temporarily laid up with illness, only earns 15s. a week when in full work, and, with a wife and seven children—two of whom contribute to the income—he pays 6s. a week for a five-roomed house, lets one room, and is enabled to pay 13d. a week for his children's schooling. He belongs to a provident and sick club, and gets assistance while ill. He has had fourteen children—one has married, and several, including twins, have died.

EDWARD COLSTON'S BIRTH-PLACE.

We have little space to glance at the very old houses in Temple. A quaint building, used as a common lodging-house, in Crown court, is quite a curiosity in its way. An old pillar, taken down there when Victoria street was made, bore date 1483. The lodging-house kitchen has oak panels, and the beams in the ceiling and the old fireplaces are suggestive of the time when this place is said to have formed part of the old Crown

hotel. In an old house on Temple back, now let out in single rooms at 2s. and 2s. 6d. a week, chiefly to old couples, the antique porch is still left, and on the mantelshelf of one room is the date 1623. Amongst others of these old places in what is left of the quaint and picturesque bits of Old Temple we were favoured with a glance at the room where Edward Colston, Bristol's great philanthropist, was born. Colston's House, which is still a substantial, well-preserved building—thanks to its walls, which are nearly three feet thick—is now used as a large basket manufactory by Mr. Reece, and it is nearly opposite White's Almshouses. Colston is stated to have been born here on Nov. 2nd, 1636, and though much of his life was spent near London, he returned to Bristol after the death of his father in 1681, and had a sugar refinery at the Old Mint (St. Peter's Hospital). Amongst his other works of benevolence, he in 1709 gave £20,000 to relieve the starving poor of London. He died at Mortlake in 1721.

Temple has the advantage of most active clergy, vestry, and churchwardens, and other Christian workers at Counterslip Chapel and elsewhere, and but for whose ministrations the parish would not have shown the improvement which has taken place there in the last twelve years. Connected with the church alone there are well attended mothers' meetings, week day and Sunday Bible classes, Sunday schools with 450 children, day schools with 800 children, and an average attendance of 650, the Ash Lodge Ragged School of 160 children under the direction of Commander Roberts, temperance societies, clothing, blanket, coal and provident clubs; while penny banks were started in connection with the schools before the Government of the day began to recognise their necessity as an encouragement to thrift. Their penny savings bank last week had on its books no fewer than 300 depositors. There are also Bible women and a Scripture reader supplementing the efforts of the clergy in constantly visiting the houses of the sick and the poor and rendering help in time of need.



CHAPTER XI.

COURT LIFE IN REDCLIFF.

IMPROVEMENTS, whether affecting streets, dwellings, or people, have, till within the last few years, crept along at a slow, steady, snail-pace in "grand old Redcliff"—one of the striking examples of "Progress and poverty" of modern times—where in close contrast have been spent the lives of the merchant prince in his counting house "mid the toils of heaping wealth," and of the most abject poor, in gloomy, stifling courts, half buried in which, within present memory, they were crowded together in single rooms

More thickly in their straw than swine
Are herded in a sty.

We can still find six or eight persons sleeping in one room, and in cases of the former with "full benefit of clergy," as the property belongs to the church vestry, who are, however, busily setting these dwellings of the poor in order. In all such excellent work "more power to them" say we. It is not edifying to think that some of the most dilapidated dwellings in the poorer parishes of the city belong to church vestries, and that in some instances appeals for renovation or restoration meet with a deaf ear. In Redcliff the vestry, who own considerable property in narrow courts and alleys, have been awakened to the fatal mistake of leasing the houses to some outsider for a number of years, and leaving the entire direction and control in his hands. Under this system, when long leases have been surrendered or have fallen in the vestry have found themselves the owners of some extraordinary dens for the housing of poor humanity, when looked at in the light of the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the neighbourhood of the Tennis court we have seen excellent model houses recently made by the Redcliff vestry sacrificing one in every three of the old hovels, and providing suitable and sanitary arrangements for each dwelling. In other cases they have simply renovated the property falling into their hands. One could only wish that as some of the poor old pensioners in

receipt of the doles and gifts pass away the quaintly-worded terms of those benefactions of philanthropists and pious citizens for special distributions on "Candlemas day," "Midsummer day," "for some superstitious use," and "on every Lord'sday for ever," admitted of the vestry extending these dwelling improvements still further. It would be a grand work. We once asked a poor law official how he accounted for so much pauperism in certain parishes in the city, apparently the centres of wealth production. He replied that it would as a rule be found that where the bequests and doles and gifts and charities were the greatest there would be found also the greatest proportion on the poor law relief list, and the most lack of self reliance. Turning, for instance, to Redcliff, out of a population of 5188, on the books of the Bristol Board of Guardians for the parish there are 320 persons in receipt of relief, one in every sixteen of the resident population! Children have been born there, people lived there, men died there with a vested interest in some pious and penitent dear old man's doles and gifts. From the cradle to the grave, the faithful sons of mother church seem to have leaned on these gifts for support. Their moral fibre was thus weakened, they themselves became flabby, yielding, and unself-reliant, and amongst some of the very poor to "stand upright" was looked upon as something so out of the common and best-behaviour-like that they would emphasise a sad story of want when speaking of their children's clothes, by telling you that "all they got is what they stand upright in." It is true that many in receipt of relief are very old people, but in the three parishes of Redcliff, Thomas, and Temple there are upwards of 600 persons on the weekly relief list. And still there are no districts in the whole city where the dwellers of the courts and alleys are more indefatigably visited by ladies and clergy. In Redcliff alone last year the ladies and others in charge of the thirty sub-districts into which the parish is divided paid no less than 12,000

visits ! The late Archdeacon Randall, when vicar of Redcliff, held that so complete was the system of visitation carried out that, if needed on any emergency, every house throughout the parish could be visited within twenty-four hours. Many of the people are nursed and fed, cared for, and substantially helped, and yet "they are not happy." Some of them are even in actual distress, and new-comers of only a week's occupation will ask for assistance; while hundreds are only in partial work. On the border line of two parishes once stood a house which, we were assured by an old resident, commanded for many years an extra rent on account of the share of doles and gifts it brought to the occupants. A lady and her friends who are conspicuous for works of active benevolence in Redcliff are this year trying the effect of twice a week selling good soup to the poor at one penny per quart, feeling that the small payment—which by no means represents the actual first cost—will encourage habits of self-help, and the effort appears to be attended with great success.

But there has been much improvement of late. Extended and compulsory elementary education, and comprehensive street improvements have done a great work in Redcliff in the last two decades, though the progress has been so slow and sluggish. We believe it was more than 40 years ago that the first house was set back in Redcliff street for the much desired street improvement now carried out; and during that period even the structural character of the place has so changed that the visitor would not recognise in the palatial modern factories and huge warehouses the picturesque old street of thirty years ago with its overhanging eaves, ancient house-fronts, and quaint gables. But the improvement here and in Pile street swept away some of the vilest dens in the city. In the veriest hotbeds of immorality, vice, and crime were for years seething and sweltering in the courts beneath the shadow of the stately church, of which it is recorded in one year alone 10,000 visitors came to see this mastery of a human hand—"The pride of Bristowe and the Western land." From the tower of the beautiful structure, hallowed with the memories of six centuries, came calmly enough the sound of the evening chimes as the rays of sunset fell on its mullioned windows, its graceful pinnacles, and chastened and picturesque and symmetrical outlines; but around was many a wretched and forlorn "home," where human beings cowered in the most abject misery. Close to the boundary wall of the church there were almost nightly scenes of riot and tumult which could only be suppressed by the strong arm of the law. The courts, now supplanted by the Harbour

Railway, were known to the police by a name which will be conveyed by the expression "Vermin Farm." They considered it the most foul place in the city, and they often found eight or ten persons crouched together in one sleeping room. At night they rarely ventured single-handed into the courts to quell a disturbance or arrest an offender. The construction of Phippen street, the levelling of the roadway in old Redcliff Pit, and subsequently the laying-out of the Harbour Railway, demolished the worst of these wretched courts, leaving only a few on the north side of Pile street. In Redcliff street, the widening of the thoroughfare destroyed some courts equally as notorious. We remember in one of these, where two sailors had been robbed of £50, the police discovered the whole of the bank-notes stuffed in some china ornaments. In another court, a great plate robbery was concocted and carried out, but the police traced the stolen property to a well-known house at Redminster. One house in Thomas street, now demolished, was the known resort of travelling thieves. Queen's Head court, in Redcliff, was so rank with foul dens of shame, where almost nightly men and women quarrelled and fought, that the late Mr. George Thomas and others interested in the neighbourhood made an effort to entirely clear it out; and eventually the last brick of it disappeared with the salvage from the Redcliff street improvement scheme, and the site of its entrance is now occupied by Mr. Freedman's picture frame shop. Half the population lived in courts, and the decent poor, jealous over the reputation of their court, then as now, had their special quarters, where honest, striving, working people, though living crowded together, kept the narrow passage in which they had their dwellings out of the police category of "bolt holes" for the escape of delinquents. When several of these decent courts, as well as the others, were swept away and the population was dispersed, the trade of the shopkeepers in Redcliff street suffered so much that many of the small shops disappeared. In fact, the whole character of the trade there changed. Before the railway was made to the New Passage, the Welsh traders used to journey to Bristol in the steamers plying to the Welsh ports and purchase much of their goods of the Redcliff shopkeepers. In the old hotel yards, numerous carriers brought customers from the country, and farmers from all the surrounding districts, putting up at these hostels, carried on their trade with the Redcliff people. The inn yards and most of the carriers have disappeared. Huge warehouses have taken the place of the yards and many of the tradesmen's shops, and are now flanking the lanes and side streets, as well as covering the sites of

the old courts and alleys. The brushmaking industry is still active in Thomas street, but it has left Redcliff street, together with the soap and candle trade, of which Redcliff was once the centre, the brass and coppersmiths, and other callings. But new ventures have been added, old ones have extended their works, and everything in Redcliff, following the widening of the thoroughfares, looks on a far bigger scale than in the olden days.

POVERTY IN THE COURTS.

Even in the present day the poorer population of Redcliff and Thomas live almost entirely in courts, and so obscured are they from the general view by big warehouses and the modern "emporium" of commerce that, so far as the ordinary street passenger is concerned, they might as well be stowed away in subterranean passages. They are not so overcrowded as in the olden time, but as a rule they are the cheerless abodes of families whose dull monotony is only relieved by the severe struggle day by day to obtain sufficient bread to eat. Most of these dwellings in passages and alleys are crumbling into decay. Some are crowded with families, nearly every woman one sees having a baby; others are given up entirely to old people, who seem to court the quietude of these dead alive spots—so removed from the rude "noise and shock and hum of life," that they form an intermediate stage between the activity of the outside world and the last resting place of the aged residents. In one of these places in Thomas street—a court of three-storied houses, where all but three are void—there are representatives of four generations in one three-roomed house—an old lady of 101 years, her daughter 59, the latter's daughter and her husband, and their child, a plump little girl of six. The old lady was well and about the house till a fortnight ago, when she was "taken all at once in her legs," and obliged to keep her bed. Both she and her daughter are in receipt of relief, but the daughter complains that she cannot afford to keep a fire for her poor old mother night and day, and the house is "banely cold," but she tries to keep a light burning and to watch her a bit. She pays 3s. 6d a week rent. The houses, which have just come into fresh hands, are to be "done up" when the old lady is gone. Nothing is more forcibly impressed upon the attention of the visitor than the great want of work in many homes of the poor. Here in the first court we enter are three cases—a nailer, with four children, occupying a two-roomed house—a wretchedly poor place—at 3s. a week, has no constant work; a labourer, now in temporary employ, went seven weeks unable to find work, and his wife, although having five children, had to find

some food for the family by going out washing; another labourer, with wife and four children, pays 2s. 10d. for two rooms, with only one bedroom for the six; he has been unable to get constant employment for the last six years, but he has now partial work at 12s. a week. In the next court a labourer, who had constant work up to Christmas, lost his situation, and has not been able to earn more than 5s. since. He has a wife and six children, the oldest child 13, a permanent cripple through a chill. He had a little money in the Savings Bank, but that has been spent, and the children are now in rags, the wife very barely clad, and they have just sold some of their furniture to pay the rent, 3s. 6d. a week for three rooms, in which the few pictures and china ornaments and nicknacks give indication of better days. In another narrow curious and crooked and corner-shaped court of old fashioned houses of a better type and cleaner, though the place itself is hemmed in and dark, we had an interesting conversation with an engine fitter 60 years of age, who was at the Avon-side Works seven years. He is out of work, has brought up a family of six, and has now two children at home under 11 years of age. He is a merry-minded little man and says he is able to work "in the shape of strength," but not "in the shape of eyes," as he is obliged to wear spectacles, and employers did not think he could do much with spectacles. In the old days they used to appreciate old age, and did not mind a man wearing spectacles, but now they seemed to think a man should always keep the same age. He used to get 34s. to £2 a week, and now receives 9s. a week from his society, but that "is not sufficient to live on." He would not live in that dull hole if he could help it. He pays 3s. a week for his house, including an old-fashioned, roomy, low-roofed kitchen, with many signs of homely comfort, but he is "obliged to light the lamp sometimes to see if the fire's burning," and where there is no daylight there can't be a lot of health, as "light and fresh air are as essential as victuals." No one ought to be "stived up" like he is, and he thinks Sir ——— has "a much better place for his horses." Here is the improved home of a drover earning 17s. a week, with a wife and three children, living in a two-roomed house at 2s. 6d. a week, and paying one shilling a week for a fourth child now on board the Formidable. They used to live in a most filthy condition in another court, where the children were covered with vermin, but after the case was taken in hand by the School Board, and one child sent to the training ship by the magistrates, from that moment the home improved and though the youngest child, two years old, is very

barely clad the home is comparatively clean to what it was. In a court off a lane there is a roomy, old-fashioned house, rented at 5s. 6d. a week by a hawker. The man suffers from chronic rheumatism, but earns about 12s. a week. The house is very grimy, and has the sour smell of accumulated dirt, coming especially from a single room occupied by a widow and three children. Two of the children go to school, and the landlady minds the third; but the room looks squalid, neglected, without any effort made for cleanliness.

A QUEER ECCLESIASTICAL COURT.

We come next to a church court, the lease of which has just been surrendered to the Redcliff vestry, and they have with commendable alacrity at once resolved to pull down the squalid and unwholesome houses, and to rebuild them upon a plan similar to that of their excellent model houses in Redcliff buildings, in the Tennis court. There is plenty of scope, as in front of the little houses is waste ground formerly used as gardens, and the whole is now to be utilised for the dwellings, and with washhouse and proper sanitary requirements for each house. It is a thickly-populated place, full of families and any number of babies. At the entrance is a big dwelling, or double house, of twelve rooms, with stairs on either side of the court passage. This house is let in single rooms, and the result of our inquiries gave the fact that there are 35 persons housed in this ecclesiastical bive, and they are "celled" as follows:—Widow and four children, one large room; labourer out of work, wife, and two children, one room; labourer, out of work, wife, and two children, one room; labourer in partial work, wife, and one child, one room; widow and daughter, one room; labourer in partial work and wife, one room; old lady and grandchild, one room; widow and three children, one room; fish hawker, wife, and one child, two rooms; labourer in work, wife, and three children, two rooms. Of all the men there are only two in constant work. The rent for the single rooms averages about 1s. 6d., except in the garrets, where one labourer, with his wife and two young children, has a very impoverished place at 1s. 3d. per week. The wife, a young woman, says her husband has not been in constant work for two years, and has only earned a few shillings since Christmas. They used to live in a cottage, but had to sell all their furniture for food, and the table and chair in their present room have been lent them by their former landlord. She had parted with her jacket on the previous day to buy some bread, as she had been obliged to send her child to school in the morning without food. She sometimes got a little help, but often she would not

know what to do if it were not for the assistance of neighbours. The story was one to excite the deepest sympathy, though we were afterwards told by a lady who knew the case that there had been some improvidence. The old lady, with grandchild, had quite a comfortable little room, and seemed happy enough. She took us into confidence, told us her family history, and we should not perhaps be betraying her trust if we give her opinion—that having rented 27 years under the vestry she really thinks they ought to house her free for the rest of her life, she being now nearly three score and ten. In the court, the three and two-roomed cottages are let at three shillings and 2s. 9d. a week. They are small, box-like rooms, but they are mostly tenanted by people with families, who will now have to leave for the reconstruction about to be undertaken. In a three-roomed cottage live a labourer, in work, his wife, and five children. The surroundings of the place are not the most cleanly, but the children look well cared-for, and the presence of two sleek cats suggests moderately comfortable circumstances.

SICKNESS, SUFFERING, AND SQUALOR.

In this same court, in a wretchedly small cottage, with two cup-board like rooms at 2s. 9d. per week, live a labourer in work, his wife and six children, the whole sleeping in one bedroom about 7½ feet square. The labourer while ill for nearly two years scarcely did any work, but he has now a situation at £1 a week. The family are still three months back in the rent and have to pay it off, and this is the present drag upon them. The wife is busy washing; a sickly child, two years old, has been successfully treated at the Children's Hospital for an internal complaint, and, though now recovering, looks very palid as she sits dolefully by the fire. The mother says she ought to give her a pint of milk a day and eggs and brandy, but "poor people cannot get that." The poor child makes an effort to smile as one speaks to her, and evidently she is treated kindly in this dingy home, though she is dressed in dirty ragged clothes. The mother says she eats heartily and often in the night craves for food. Startled by the sudden cry of a baby so close to our feet that we thought it had been trodden upon, one is at a loss for a time to ascertain where it can be. The cry seems to come from underground; and we found that as the front door opened it covered the entrance to the little bedroom, seated on the floor of which a girl of eight is nursing the baby three months old. A boy of four is sitting alongside her, and on the largest of two bare looking bedsteads which nearly cover the room lies another boy of six, ill, and his face looked flushed and

feverish. The room is so dirty and the clothes so soiled—with the exception of one new piece of holland placed by the sick boy—that it is full of a sour, sickening smell. A dust-coated curtain, almost covering the small unopened window, prevents the wholesome light entering the room; and in this dingy home of these little ones, whose unhappy lot it seems to be to suffer a big share of sickness and sorrow and dulness, instead of the brightness and joy, the fun and frolic, and the buoyant playfulness of childhood, their young life appears to be the embodiment of all that is gloomy and cheerless. Care, trouble, sickness, and want have doubtless produced much of the dark shadow of this unwelcome picture of a poor home; but the conditions imposed on the inmates of the wretched dwelling might also be answerable for some of it, and one is only glad to think that those conditions are immediately to be improved.

In a three-roomed cottage, at 3s. per week, in this court we find a somewhat better home, with indications of provident habits; the husband, a labourer, who gets 31. an hour for constant work, pays into a club at his factory 1s. 3d. per week for use in time of sickness. He has a wife, with five children under twelve years; the wife only gets 11s. or 12s. a week to keep home and pay the rent. In the "struggle to rub along" she tries to earn a little herself, and here is a family who would doubtless take every advantage of an improved dwelling.

ART IN THE COTTAGE.

In a quiet corner of this court, in a humble cottage standing by itself, where one would little expect to find any devotion to the muses and the fine arts, we stumble upon a curious and interesting little art gallery of a ship carpenter, who, when the almost forgotten trade of shipbuilding was in its prime in Bristol, was so devoted to the art of painting that in his leisure hours he completely covered the walls, doors, skirting boards, lintels, and shutters of his house with oil paintings. Figures of Neptunes and mermaids, satyrs and sylphs, and mythological heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses, which his creative fancy has depicted in glowing colours, even outside the house, where they have stood the rough usage of a crowded court and exposure to rain and winter storms for at least a decade, are as bright as when the pigments were first laid on. A rough piece of Indian matting lining the wire work of the small porch is still covered with these figures and shields. In anything approaching the "human form divine" the humble artist appears to have had an appreciative eye for the "line of beauty," but the ship carpenter

was "all at sea" when he touched the figure of an animal, else the square outlines of a cow, suggestive of a child's slate with a tail to it, belie his handiwork. He left the court ten years ago, and we were unable to learn his name, and the cottage is now occupied by a labourer and his wife and two children. The poor woman regrets the approaching demolition of this fine art dwelling, and expresses her opinion that the Vestry should present the painted doors to her children.

In an adjoining court, which since Christmas has fallen into the hands of the Vestry, the work of renovation has commenced. The rooms are rather dingy. For a house of three rooms a towel-horse maker, who complains that machinery has deprived him of much of his trade, pays 4s. a week rent, and has a wife and four children. He manages to earn from 10s. to 12s. a week sometimes, but the home is poor indeed, and the wife looks dejected enough at the work being so slack. In two other dwellings visited here we hear further complaints of want of work. A stout, robust, healthy quay labourer, with wife and three children, pays 2s. 8d. per week for a three-roomed house. The man says he has only earned 2s. 6d. in eight days, though he is searching for work from six and seven in the morning till dusk; and his eldest boy at 5s. a week earns more than he is obtaining at present. With the boy's wages, supplemented by a little trouser making by his wife, they keep a comfortable home. The School Board has had its influence here, though, by the by, there is not a Board School in the parish; but the Board officers are daily at work here, looking up the children and sending them to the excellent schools of Redcliff. These poor people speak of the "fourth standard" with easy familiarity, and they show with no little pride the children's school prizes. The other case is that of a carpenter, who has been suffering from rheumatic fever, and is only in partial work. He has a wife with four children under 13 years. He pays 2s. 8d. a week for two rooms, the six in family sleeping in one bedroom. The home is moderately tidy, but the children are dirty; and with the man's limited earnings the strain is doubtless severe.

Some cottages in an open court near here are quite an example to the neighbourhood for their cleanly and wholesome appearance. They are three, four, and five-roomed houses, the exteriors fresh with stucco and paint; and the rents range from 4s. to 6s. 6d. a week, and the occupants are mostly in work. The Phippen Street Model Lodging Houses, a range of airy buildings with three rooms to a family, at from 3s. 6d. to 4s. per week, are stated to have well answered their purpose, and the "houses" let well,

At any rate, it effected a great improvement in the dwellings of the poor when these lofty buildings were erected, in contrast with the miserable houses in the old street before the railway was built.

COURTS IN PILE STREET.

"Pile street, sir; why its the Mall—Clifton itself—compared with what it was in the old days before the worst courts were swept away." This was the extravagant hyperbole in which a Redcliffite expressed his idea of the improved state of things in the neighbourhood of which, behind the building now used as a Ragged School, still stands the humble house where was born in 1752 the ill-starred Chatterton—

The sleepless soul that perished in his pride.

He was the posthumous son of the master of the adjoining school. On a tablet in front of the dwelling is the inscription, "This house was erected by Giles Malpas, gent., for the use of the master of this school, in December, 1749." The only courts left are those on the north side, and they are occupied by very poor people, many of the men out of work, or only getting little work, while their wives chop sticks, and we find one, two, or three between 50 and 60 years of age thus engaged. The tone of the place has greatly improved, though a medical man assures us that even now "peace and goodwill" does not always prevail there. The houses are very old and of different sizes, but we find in one narrow court a labourer paying 1s. 6d. a week for two rooms in disrepair, and with ceilings falling in. He has a wife and two children, and only gets three or four days' work a week. Another quay labourer, with wife and two children, paying the same rent, has only earned 5s. since Christmas; but as their infant has been born during that time they have received assistance from the church visitors. Still, they have had to part with many of their things, and as the husband has earned nothing for a week they will have to sell more. A widow in receipt of relief for herself and three children pays 4s. a week for a house, and lets one room to a labourer who is a cripple. The widow chops sticks, and is industrious enough to occasionally help the cripple, who, she says, while out of work, would otherwise starve. In the houses visited here only one labourer was in full work. In another more open court of little two and three-roomed houses, at 1s. 10d. to 3s. 3d. per week, there are several more men out of work, and the garden spaces in front of the houses are used for stacking heavy blocks of firewood, which the women chop in their kitchens, till in some small rooms the wood is piled up nearly to

the ceiling, so that, although the men are out of work, money is earned. Here is the case of a husband ill and out of work, and his wife and two grown-up daughters thus working hard at stick-chopping in their kitchen—quite a busy scene. A labourer paying 1s. 10d. a week for two rooms, has only one bedroom for himself, wife, and four children; he has only done two days' work since Christmas; he has parted with some of his furniture, but he has had some assistance, and his children are apparently well looked after and healthy. Another labourer, ill, wife and four children (one bedroom); the husband belongs to the Shepherds' Society, and has 14s. a week for a time during his illness. In two cases here we find men in work, labourers, earning 18s. and £1 a week when in full work, but one of them is "always out in wet weather," and his wife chops sticks. Many of these houses, with dingy walls, stone floors, and small rooms, are cheerless places, where there is little if anything in the surroundings to suggest home comfort, except in two cases—those of a scavenger in full work with wife and seven children, living in a four-roomed house; and an old couple of 70 years, living in a two-roomed house, where the walls were hung with pictures, one steel engraving representing the victory of Lord Howe over the French in 1794.

PRIVATION THROUGH WANT OF WORK.

Coming to the curious zigzag of courts and alleys, and courts within courts, in Redcliff street towards the harbour, and on Redcliff hill, one is astonished to find, notwithstanding the erection of large factories and warehouses and railway carriers' yards covering the sites of former courts and small shops in Redcliff, there are so many men in want of work. The Mayor was quite right when at a meeting a few months back he said what Bristol wanted was more enterprise among her manufacturers, who, taking advantage of the facilities now offered for obtaining cheap supplies of coal and iron, the ready transit of goods inland, and the opportunities for export, would find ample scope for the extension of local industries; while the increase in the shipping trade would be gladly hailed by hundreds of willing labourers now idle. In one crooked court, knocking at what looked like a shutter or a cupboard door, our companion explained that it led up steps to a poor man's home, where we find a Quay labourer out of work, with wife and five children. The rooms are nearly empty, the furniture having been sold for food, and the bed is almost without covering. The man says he is "as strong as a bull," but cannot get more than two or three days a week now at the best

of times, and he has recently gone more than a week without being able to earn anything, and for one whole day the children were without food. The wife adds, "My husband and I have gone from one morning till the following evening before we got food. We had nothing at all, and if it had not been for the lady at the vicarage we should have starved." One child has been taken care of by a relative, they have buried twins, and have four children living with them in their bare and dreary home, for which they pay 2s. per week; but there has been scarcely anything at all to do since Christmas, and if one ship comes in "there's a rush of labourers enough to eat her cargo," when only a limited number are wanted. Life in these courts off courts and alleys within alleys must be inexpressibly dull and depressing, and when accompanied by anxiety as to obtaining from day to day the barest necessities of life, the lot of the court dweller is gloomy indeed. We may quote among other instances of want of work the following as they occur in our note-book:—Bootcloser, with wife and three children, pays 3s. 2d. for three rooms, cannot get two days' work a week since Christmas; has one son earning 2s. 6d. a week; has sold furniture and clothes for food; had assistance from vestry at Christmas. Labourer out of work ever since Christmas, wife and four children, but thanks to the boys, who unlike the husband can get constant work, they get along fairly well; eldest son, 17, earns 10s., and the next 5s. a week. Blacksmith out of work for seven weeks, has wife and three children, and has not earned more than two or three shillings a week; wife earns a little money by trouser making; when laid up with illness four years ago he and his family had to go to the workhouse, where one of his children, an interesting little girl of 12, got bad eyes, and her sight is badly impaired. Labourer, two days' work a week, with wife and four children; cannot get more work. Plasterer, has only done three days a week, and latterly only one day a week; has wife and five children, but wife helps income by trouser making. Labourer, living in the Brickyard, Cathay, with wife and six children under 11, has only earned 8s. since Christmas, and has parted with furniture and clothes.

THE STRUGGLING POOR.

Amongst many cases of this class we may quote the following:—Labourer, earning 19s. a week, with wife and six children, pays 3s. a week for three-roomed house, keeps a good home, and pays 14d. a week for his children's schooling. Labourer, earning from 10s. to 15s. a week, has wife and three children, pays

2s. 6d. a week for three rooms, has whitelined and coloured out his house himself because the landlord would not do it, and he keeps a tidy home. Labourer, only earning 5s. a week since Christmas, has a wife and five children, and the wife keeps a small shop, but for which they would not have been able to live; they pay school fees, and 7d. a week for insurance. In Chatterton square and Rowley place there are many comfortable homes of the struggling poor. Most of the men here are in work, but this is not the case always. Here is the case of a labourer and wife and six children. The eldest boy earns 4s. a week, five go to school, and 13d. a week is paid for them by the father, though he has only two or three days' work a week in certain months of the year. We visited other comfortable homes in this neighbourhood, where working men were earning £1 or 22s. a week, but as we have said most of these men would be in constant employ.

We have already mentioned some cases of crowded homes in Thomas and Redcliff. Here are a few more. Labourer out of work and wife have living with them in three-roomed house, Cathay, their daughter and husband and four children, and six sleeping in one bedroom; the house smells unwholesome, the drainage is bad, and in other houses in this place the closets are close to the living rooms, with no backlet, and without ventilation. There are twenty small houses here, and about 100 people. We have not space to detail cases, but here is one of a mechanic whose sight has become impaired, and he is receiving 3s. a week from his society; his employers gave him a mangle for his wife, and he occupies two rooms out of four in a fair-sized house; but he has a wife and eight children, and there is only one bedroom for the eight. The home, however, is well kept. A cab-driver in Cathay, whose "regular" earnings would be 10s., has a wife, and eight children under fifteen years, the youngest being eight weeks; and 4s. a week is paid for the rent of a four-roomed house. There are two or three gloomy and grimy houses in a court on the west side of Redcliff hill, and in one the odour was as bad as that of St. Jude's; and similar places can be found in one or two wretched homes beyond what is known as "The Brickyard." One house, where a woman was in her confinement, there was not an article of furniture in the lower room, and the place looked black with grime. We also visited the very poor home of a widow with seven children, where a piece of old sack, laid across the iron bedstead, served the purpose of a bed. Some houses in a court off Redcliff Mead lane, where the rooms are small and damp, and the homes altogether dreary, are about to come down.

THE TENNIS COURT.

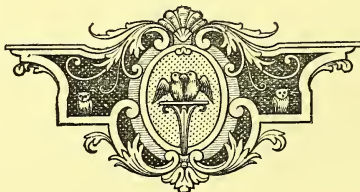
Though much yet remains to be done in the district in the neighbourhood of the Tennis court, or Bryant street, Redcliff hill, a great improvement has been effected, and here Alderman Cope Proctor and the Redcliff Vestry have inaugurated a most desirable progress in bettering the condition of the homes of the poor. One side of Bryant street itself has been renovated; Orchard square and adjoining houses, with Redcliff square, have been put in a state of repair, and now look wholesome enough; and in Redcliff buildings, as we have indicated, the Vestry have shown the neighbourhood some really model houses for the poor in the improvement they have effected. The appearance of the place itself offers a practical lesson of cleanliness and comfort to a thickly-populated neighbourhood; but, apart from this, a benevolent lady, taking the whole of the houses at a certain fixed sum, lets them to decent poor people at a low rental well within their means.

The Church schools of Redcliff are excellently managed and worked. In the Redcliff Endowed Boys' School there are 542 boys on the books, with an average attendance of 480; the Girls' school, Ship lane, has 440 on the books and 320 average

attendances; and the Infant school 315 on the books and 260 average. The Pile street school, opened two or three years ago for the ragged children rejected from other schools, has 80 on the books and 60 average, and the children, under the direction of Mr. Biggs, have shown much improvement. There is also an entirely new school in Barnard's place, on the Cut, in connection with the Redcliff Mission Church, opened in 1882, and there are 200 children on the books, and 130 in average attendance. The total expenditure on the schools, including the Government grants—which are very high—was £2073 13s. 6d. Support is given to the mission church by the congregation of St. Paul's Church, Clifton, through Canon Mather.

In Langton street, the Wesleyan Chapel Day School numbers about 300, and the congregation have just added a lecture room and two large vestries for class rooms at a cost of £1000, all of which has, we believe, been obtained. They have also improved the day school, especially with regard to the sanitary arrangements.

Mr. S. Thomas has, somewhat recently, opened a large mission chapel in Redcliff Mead lane, where he has been already doing a great and successful work amongst the poor people of that neighbourhood, and as many as 300 or 400 people attend the mission.



CHAPTER XII.

HUNGER HAUNTED HOMES IN BEDMINSTER.

THERE is so much of the new blended with the comparatively little left of the old in the network of streets in the widespread district of Bedminster, that its modern appearance easily misleads the visitor, while local historians have said so little about it that one is apt to forget that it is one of the oldest suburbs of the ancient city. The "Royal manor of Bedminster," at the date of the Domesday Survey (1086) was held by William the Conqueror in right of the Crown as heir and successor of King Edward the Confessor. It was afterwards held by Robert Fitzhardinge, the great progenitor of the Berkeley family, who died in 1170, and was buried in the "Abbey church" of St. Augustine, which he founded in the centre of the city. On the site of the present parish church there was a religious house dating back to the year 1003. At "Brightbow," a name still handed down to us in the neighbourhood of the "Causeway," Lord Robert de Berkeley founded, in the early part of the 13th century, the Hospital of St. Catherine, for the relief of travellers and pilgrims; and to the warden and brethren of the hospital were subsequently added a few priests. In 1346 Sir Thomas Berkeley, who had "an embattled mansion house" in Bedminster, enlarged the hospital and founded a chantry in the chapel of the hospital for a priest to say mass for his father and mother. In those ancient times Bedminster was a village suburb of a few hundred inhabitants, but it had a close association with Redcliff. In Chatterton's time, less than a century and half ago, it was known as the "Gretna Green" of the west, thanks to the then rector of the parish, the Rev. Emanuel Collins, A.M., mixing up the business of the world and the flesh with the cure of souls and keeping a publichouse, known, we believe, as "the Marlborough," at which he performed the marriage ceremony for the modest fee of "a crown a couple." These clandestine marriages became so flagrant here that they were as notorious as those of "Gretna Green" itself, and ancient records

tell us that the abuse of the sacred ordinance at the Bedminster tavern was brought under Parliamentary notice when Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 was passed. "Caterwauling Collins," as Chatterton irreverently dubbed him, was no mean verse-writer, but frequently lampooning his neighbours he drew down upon him the scathing sneer of the boy-poet in the line

Let me like midnight cats, or Collins, sing!

In the time of the Georges little heed was paid to the requisite residence in a parish while the banns were published, a simple letter of notice to the clergy, followed by the attendance of the couple at the end of a month, being a not uncommon thing judging from the following copy of a letter of the period, which we have taken from the original:—"Sir, I right theas fue lines to you sir, to Ex Isak Curnock and Anna Mills in curch next Sunday, in the curch of —, in the city of Bristol, sir; Sundry mont whea meet you, sir, at the church by 10 Clock." Arno's Vale, the neighbourhood of the present cemetery, was a place of pleasant retreat in Chatterton's time, and he tells us that

The citys walked out to Arno's dusty vale,
To take a smack at politics and ale.

In the beginning of the present century, when the New Cut was excavated to change the course of the tidal river, the population of Bedminster was 3278. In 1811 it was only 4577; in 1821 it had reached 7979; in 1831 the number had nearly doubled, the population being 13,130; in 1841 it was 17,862. In 1851 the number reached 19,429. So recently as forty-five years ago, when Mr. Henry Kingdon, the veteran city missionary, commenced his work there, trees still flanked the west end of the Causeway, and the population was little more than a third of its present big growth of 46,000. The place was so badly lighted that after sunset the inhabitants had to grope their way in the dark; the back streets

and courts were without pavements, were badly drained, and generally in a filthy condition, and the supply of water to the poor was scanty. Now, most of the back streets and squares are fairly lighted, there are few streets that are not well-paved and drained, and pure water is pretty freely supplied to the poorest neighbourhood. The City Mission Committee were so impressed with the need of earnest work there, that at the solicitation of Mr. Kingdon, and with funds chiefly collected by him, they built there their first mission chapel (Sergeant street). At that time there were only the National School and the Infant School, founded by the late John Hare. Now, in addition to these, there are the British Schools, the St. Paul's Schools, the St. Luke's Schools, the Board Schools at Totterdown, Bedminster Down, and Ashton Gate, together providing accommodation for between 6000 and 7000 children. Forty-five years ago there were only two churches and four chapels, now there are six churches and 17 chapels, providing, in addition to their Sunday schools, accommodation for about 14,000 adults. Bedminster also has its Temperance Lecture Hall, and its branch Free Library, with 7000 volumes, for its big population, which has grown to within 6000 or 7000 of the whole city of Bath. Its tanneries and breweries and collieries have been its chief industries, but immense numbers of the population look to the old city itself for their employment and means of support. Many, if they do not "go down to the sea in ships," get their living directly from the labour provided by the vessels sailing into the port. When the population of the city overflowed its ancient borders many hundreds were housed in Bedminster; and as the place extended and new streets increased on every hand, many poor city people found themselves in reduced circumstances, and crossing the water, socially buried themselves in the big suburb of Bedminster. Scores of these impoverished families were persons who, having seen better days, had left comfortable and happy homes—which dire misfortune had broken up—and

With dread of nothing more
Than to be thought necessitous and poor,

they sought obscurity in their hour of humiliation and trial in small homes in the labyrinth of narrow streets, separated from the whirl of life and the glare of the great city by "the silent highway of the river." Some of these went there to silently sink under their misfortunes, and others to battle against them, and once more to rise to the surface. But, though large numbers kept very poor, there was always a healthy and vigorous tone in Bedminster,

unsurpassed by that of any other suburb thickly populated with a similar class; till the loss of the shipbuilding art, the depression of the general trade of the city, the sad falling off in the shipping of the port, the abstraction of the locomotive engine works by the Great Western Railway Company, and the closing of some tanneries and sugar refineries keenly affected the whole district, and intensified the poverty previously existing there. So great is the present poverty that, after spending nearly a week there, we find it necessary to confine our present notice of the homes of the poor to East Bedminster, with Still House lane, leaving West Bedminster for next week.

EAST BEDMINSTER.

It is now within four months of a quarter of a century ago that the Rev. Dr. Doudney, "Old Jonathan," commenced his popular work amongst the poor by preaching in his temporary wooden church in Princess street, and, after a few years' ministration there, he found the poverty so great even then that he said he could not carry on his work there without the aid of a soup-kitchen—which he has since built on a large and most complete scale; and every winter hundreds of the very poor are thankful for its timely help. As we have shown, there are many other agencies at work in East Bedminster, but the great army of the poor has increased, and none but those who are constantly in their homes can have any conception of the hapless lot of many with empty rooms, blank firesides, bare cupboards, and hungry children, whose bodies are scarcely covered with the few rags drawn over them. One, of course, does not find this in the main thoroughfares, the front dwellings, or the new houses ranked-up on the healthy hill-slopes, where there are the abodes of "warm-housed wealth or humble ease" compared with these lowly dwellings in which furniture has to be sold and clothes have to be taken off the backs of children to buy food in the grim struggle daily made to stave off hunger owing to actual want of work. This outcry for more work meets one in the crowded homes of nearly every lane, and "place," and "building," but the keen struggle is unseen till one is brought in close contact with it in the poorest dwellings off Stillhouse lane, Whitehouse street, Water's place, the Higgery, Doveton street and neighbourhood. With hunger thus daily haunting the home, the wonder is that the children look so well as they do. In comparatively few instances do we find them with faces showing the result of any prolonged want of food. Bedminster people, like most of the genuine working classes, look after their children. Some of the most impoverished may go

back in their rent for weeks during a prolonged dearth of work, but they endeavour to feed their little ones. We have seen a home swept of all its belongings except a straw bed on the floor, but the children had had some bread. We have been shown rooms and inmates alike black with accumulated dirt, but the little mouths have not gone entirely without food very long. During the present work-famine, the family have sometimes to wait till late in the afternoon before they break their day's fast, and if the bread-winner comes home with no money, the mother will, perhaps, go to a neighbour and with that unselfish kindness, tender feeling, and pitying regard which the poor have for one another, the needed help will be given. But there are cases in which hunger is keenly felt, and the conditions surrounding the home are most lamentable. Here are a few of them :—

MISERY AND WANT.

In the neighbourhood of Waters place we found a labouring man and wife, with seven children under 11 years of age, occupying a two-roomed house, with a few articles of furniture in it. They have been there only a few months. The husband can get very little work, and has only earned from 3s. to 7s. a week, and 2s. 6d. has to be paid out of this for rent. He states that one day last week the family were all day without any food, and for two or three days they had nothing till the afternoon of each day, the children, whose fees are paid, going to school without food. The nine persons sleep in one small room. A labourer, near Doveton street, cannot find any work; he has a wife with six children, and of the two elder boys one earns 5s. a week, the other is out of work, and the wife is obliged to go out to earn a little money, leaving a girl of four years to mind the baby, a year and seven months old. While she was out the infant fell against the bars of the firegrate and seared its face fearfully, so that the poor little one will be marked for life. The wife has sold the bed for food, and is just going to pledge the counterpane for the same purpose, and she is crying bitterly at her most miserable lot. The house in her absence is in a most neglected state, and the rooms and children begrimed with dirt. Near the railway embankment we find a most bare and blank home of a labourer, with wife and four young children. A box and two stools make up nearly all the furniture of the living room; there is a meat tin on the hob for a kettle, the children are raggedly dressed, and the poor, dejected woman, who has just come in with her scanty clothing drenched with rain, has been trying to sell a few oranges which she has in a hand basket. The burthen of some special sorrow seems laid upon mother and children,

as the former states that her husband has done no work since Christmas. Her boy earns 4s. 6d. a week, but the rent of the house is 3s. 6d., and on Tuesday they had no food after breakfast, and the children went to bed without any, as she that day earned nothing. They had a ticket given them for soup Wednesday, but the crowd was so great that her daughter could not get it. Her little girl had been to school several times without food, and once both in the morning and afternoon. The fees were paid by the guardians. When the child went for her school examination, and passed the second standard, she went to school without any food. The poor woman, who looks haggard and weary enough, has passed through much trouble, and the School Board officer, having the case under his cognizance, knows of one sad and especially trying time which she passed through. Near John's buildings, a miserable looking woman, poorly clad, with gaunt face and forlorn look, lives in a most squalid home with a family of seven, including the child of her daughter, who works at a factory for 4s. 6d. a week. Her husband has left her, her eldest boy sells a little fish, and he earns from four to five shillings a week, but though she has to pay only 2s. 6d. a week rent for her three roomed house, she sometimes has only a half quarter of bread for the eight persons. She has not troubled the parish, though they have been nearly starving. A shoemaker, with wife and five children under 13, has done no work since Christmas, till last week. He is living off Still-house lane, in a dingy house where the paper is rotting off the walls, and all the furniture is sold except a broken chair. He earned 6s. last week, but nothing this; his wife is chopping sticks in the kitchen, the children are poorly clad, and the parents say they have had to sell the little one's clothes for food, but the house is in a shocking condition. There is a wholesome horror of the workhouse and the relief table in a parish where, amongst the poor, more than in any parish we have entered, there is an impression that relief, even in deserving cases, is drawn as hard as possible; and rather than apply for the school fees to the Bedminster Guardians or their representatives, the parents will send the children a mile or a mile and a half to a Board school, where the fees can, if deemed necessary, be remitted by the School Board itself. Here is a case off Stillhouse lane, in which a labourer, ill six weeks, has just resumed work. He has a wife, with five children under 13 years of age, and pays 2s. 8d. a week for a three-roomed house. The wife says they sold nearly everything they had, even to the children's bed, rather than apply to the parish, and the unfortunate little ones are nearly naked, some of them having only one article of clothing. A few pictures

on the walls are the index of better times, and the squalor may possibly have come with the poverty, but the room is dirt-coated and uncared for, and the children in this home have only been forced into school by the strong arm of the School Board.

In the courts and alleys off Stillhouse lane, in the tenement houses, some of the hardest poverty will be found. These houses are let out in single rooms, not so dingy as those of St. Jude's, and as a rule they will not be found clammy with dirt and black with filthy accretions of years, like the vagrant's favourite retreat in the St. Jude's rookeries. Here and there a "home" will be found like it, but in one case where every article that would realise a penny had been sold, with the exception of a straw bed and a patchwork quilt in one corner of the room, the floor was as clean as water and house-flannel could make it. In one of these six-roomed houses the top front room was occupied by a widow and child; next room empty; next floor, widow, a tailoress, and four children in one room; and next, a labourer out of work, his wife with four children under 12 years, the lower part of the house being occupied by the persons who rent the house. The labourer has scarcely had two days' work a week since Christmas, and one week he only earned a shilling. They pay 1s. 9d. a week rent, and six persons live and sleep in one room, the wife endeavouring now and then to get a little tailoring, and the boy daily sells articles in the streets; but for five weeks the family have scarcely obtained enough bread to eat; the children look hungry, and, like the mother, they are scantily dressed, but in the patches of carpet on the floor there are indications of effort to make the poor home comfortable. The wife states that they have gone back five weeks in their rent, and they know not what they shall do. In another court, a labourer, with wife and five children, rents a small house at 2s. 3d. per week, and want of work has brought his family to the border-line of starvation. He only gets one or two days' work a week, and his wife goes out washing clothes. She tells us that last Sunday the family had no food whatever in the house till a kind neighbour gave them a loaf. She has sold furniture and articles of clothing to get food, and when she took her baby to the doctor when it was ill, he said it was half-starved. Only a few steps away we find a precisely similar case, the husband having only earned 9s. in four or five weeks, and the wife getting a little work two days a week; they have four children, and have "parted with everything they can raise sixpence upon." The hapless little ones are only half clothed, and a girl of three and half years is "nursing the baby," rocking it in her arms and soothing it like an

experienced mother. The condition of the family has brought them very close to the workhouse, but they "dread to go there." The wife states that a fortnight ago they actually went a day and a half without food, till they obtained a soup ticket and a loaf of bread.

ON THE BORDER LINE OF STARVATION.

With reference to one of the cases described above, we were afterwards told that there must be something wrong in it, and that it would be well to omit it. Possibly the husband drinks or is utterly reckless of his family's welfare; but that does not do away with the shockingly destitute condition of the wife, the little ones, and the home. It does not get rid of the conditions which we actually see and describe, the empty room, the scanty fire, some old box used as a seat, the poor, meagrely-clad woman, drenched with rain in the effort to sell a few articles to obtain food for the children. And even if her own conduct was not all that could be desired, one has to look at the conditions under which these fellow-creatures live, and wonder what we should be if similarly placed—the nerves strained to the utmost tension in the keen anxiety as to the supply of daily bread, with the chance of getting any at all for the children often trembling in the balance—clothes wet through in trudging through heavy storms without protecting wrapper or outer covering, and no wardrobe from which to select a change—wet-footed and nothing dry to put on, though impaired condition of health make it necessary—weariness in mind and tired in body, and yet often compelled to seek rest without a bed and to lie down at night in the clothes worn from day to day—home and life altogether cheerless, blank, miserable. This is by no means a solitary instance. We have several other cases of the same kind. In a court off Stillhouse lane the houses are so old and tumble-down that only two or three are occupied, and in one of these live a labourer and wife with four children under 11 years, and they pay 2s. 6d. a week for three rooms. The man has not had a week's work since last November. Since Christmas he has had about two days a week, but one week he earned nothing. Last week he was doing better. The house is bare, the children are in rags, nearly everything has been sold for food, and the wife says the landlord would have turned them all out the week before last but for two days' work she got, and was thus able to pay some of the back rent. That fearful week they went from Tuesday night till Thursday morning at post time without any food. Finding everything was gone by Tuesday night the wife states she wrote

to her mother, and till her reply came on Thursday morning with a Post-office order for 1s. 6d. they had had no food, though she was at the time nursing a baby 14 months old. The father was obliged to go out when the children asked for some bread. The appearance of the half-clad children sitting on the floor of the wretchedly-poor dwelling tended to confirm the woman's statement, which she made without any indication of asking for aid, and she voluntarily stated that her husband had a capital week last week and earned 9s. 6d. During the past week the Rev. Dr. Doudney has had his soup kitchen thronged with men out of work, and even in the daytime, at the distribution to those who come from families with tickets or pennies, hungry men have followed the Doctor down to his soup kitchen, and from 50 to 80 at a time have been treated to basins of soup at the adjoining Ragged School. Speaking of the appearance of the school on Friday morning, when it was filled with the Ragged School children and 78 men out of work—who dropped in for a basin of soup and thick slices of bread—the Doctor says, "I don't think I ever witnessed a more touching scene, even taking into account the famine scenes in Ireland." On that morning 800 quarts of soup were distributed in a little over half an hour, so perfect are the arrangements under the care of Mr. Lockyer.

GLOOMY AND SQUALID HOMES.

Despite the numerous uplifting agencies at work, there are plenty of squalid homes in the district under notice. Here is a gloomy and dismal picture of one in a court off Brown's row, where the husband, in work at 14s. a week, has a wife with seven young children, and rents a two-roomed house at 2s. 6d. per week, the nine persons sleeping in one bedroom. With so many to feed the wife has to help the income by going out to work. The parents are out; the eldest boy, left to mind the children, is out; and the fire is going out. The baby, twelve months old, a puny little thing with shrunken face, is in bed, and the other children, in rags and tatters, are crouching round the still smouldering embers of the fire. One poor little fellow of three years has wandered into the street, but the gale has overtaken him, and, half naked, with shirt and one other garment fluttering in ribands like the torn sails of a ship in a storm, he is tacking for home, giving out a wail of distress every moment as the boisterous sou-wester threatens to strip him of every bit of rag he has flying before he can reach port. His cries do not cease when he finds the fire out as he comes to an anchor almost on the very bars. But the elder boy, of eleven, now arrives and tries to rekindle the fire by blow-

ing the embers, and as they begin to glow the little fellow who weathered the storm ceases crying, and the half-clad children hustle together for warmth before the grate. They are all undersized, and one might easily take the three and the five year old for twins, while a girl of seven looks scarcely as though she had seen five summers. "Winters" would probably be the more suitable word, looking at the dreary, dirty, dismal home in which her life has been spent. It would take a lot of sunshine to brighten this home. The walls are smoke begrimed, the windows coated with dust, the floor black and bare, and there is scarcely a whole article of furniture in the place. The bottle has part of the neck off, the glass tumbler is chipped, the straight public-house "pint" is minus the handle, the few bits of household crockery are shattered, and even the sugar box, which does duty for a chair, is shabby, and room and children seem half smothered in smut. A visitor suggested oaks to the weather beaten one, as he ventured to offer him a copper, but there at once came a chorus of "biscuits!" and off went the purser of the crew for the desired purchase.

Here is one room in a dull court from which a destitute family—husband, wife, and five children—have just flitted. Their lot was of the hardest one can conceive. They tried to pick up a living by collecting from ash tips old meat tins, to melt down for the solder, which they sold. They were in deep distress, the children almost naked, and sleeping on the floor and in cupboards, the family of seven having to live entirely in one room. A gentleman in Clifton hearing, through the School Board officer, of their forlorn condition, gave the man a few shillings to enable him to buy a basket and some fruit for sale, and they suddenly left the neighbourhood. In the "squares" and "places" off Stillhouse lane many of the old houses are in a most dilapidated condition, with the ceilings falling in, the walls crumbling to pieces with dampness and neglect, the paper hanging in strips like the tattered bills on a posting station after a winter gale. There is, perhaps, some excuse for the landlord when hundreds of the poor people are obliged through the winter to "go back" in their rent, while the squalid condition in which many of them live, and the utter absence of cleanliness or slightest effort to keep the home clean, contribute to the increasing decay and mouldy appearance of the dwelling. Most of the poor people will stay on and pay up weeks and months of back rent when they get work, and it is the shifting population who contribute most to the damage of the houses. We enter one place where a shoemaker and a young woman, taking a house at 4s. a week, let out a room at 1s. 3d. per

week to a labourer and his wife, received the money for the sub-letting, and never paid any money to the landlord. They slept on the floor, and one night, packing up all their goods in a sheet, they left for Wales. They were £4 in debt to the landlord, and the rooms were left covered with dust and filth, in some places two inches deep. In many of these houses, with stone floored rooms, entered straight from the court flags, the floors in wet weather are as damp and miry as the road outside. In some of the worst instances of dirt and squalor the children get loathsome affections of the head, and in one case where the walls, the scant furniture, the children's flesh, and their clothes had an extra coating of accumulative dirt, one young, healthy looking girl of twelve years was as bald as an old man, and even her eyebrows had been eaten off—the mother said by some insect or worm. In one wretched house, where live a poor old couple in one room at 9d. per week, and a woman with her daughter and son occupying two rooms at 1s. 6d., we find the fourth room, with small ante-room six feet square, rented by a farrier in work, with his daughter twelve years of age, and an old man, who works with the girl's father. The room is as black and grimy as a coal cellar. How the lodger sleeps in the living room is hardly apparent, but the father and daughter sleep on the floor in the ante-room of this gloomy den, which forms the home of a young girl in her childhood.

We next enter a quadrangle lined with about 30 small two and four-roomed houses, with gardens in front giving some open air space, but the place is indifferently lighted at night; it looks dreary in the daytime, and many of the homes are as dirty and squalid as any we have seen, in many cases the only sign of improvement being amongst the children, whom the School Board officers have forced into schools. Even in the dingiest places, with most of the occupants nearly black with dirt, one can generally see a marked difference in the children when attending school, contrasted with the appearance of those who stay at home. For instance, here is a labourer in work at 17s a week, paying 4s. a week for one of three houses. He has a wife with six children under 13, and four go to school, eight pence a week being paid for their fees. The wife is industrious and helps the income by stick chopping, and the rooms and inmates seemed ingrained with dirt, while the children who do not attend school are nearly naked. The eldest girl of 12 and the boy—the “scholars” of the family, attending school regularly—are fully clothed and show signs of some acquaintance with soap and water, but the others are black. A little girl, with good features, thoughtful

expressive face, and large lustrous eyes, is most poorly clad, and the clothes she has are grimy with dirt; she is interested in our inquiries; is curious as to their meaning, and throughout the time we are there her mobile face shows the quickening interest she feels in all that takes place. The curly-haired girl of four, the baby, and the mother herself, a fine, handsome woman, have their full share of the dirt of this grimy home; but there is something in the appearance of all which leads one to picture to himself what they would be under different conditions in a clean, healthy, well-kept dwelling. “You should come and see my place,” says an active, chatty little woman, as she leads us to her two-roomed cottage, for which she pays 3s. a week. “I got the water running down the walls upstairs, and there it is on the back of that wall, and I have not had a penn’orth done to it by the landlord this eight years, except a bit of paper he gave me.” The house is damp, but it is a great contrast to the one we have just left, though the husband, a labourer, has been out of work six weeks till this week. He has a wife and four children, but there is much thrift, and consequently much real comfort in the household, notwithstanding the most adverse circumstances, for the family number six, one son being eighteen years old and the eldest girl 13, and they all sleep in one bedroom about nine or ten feet square, but the little woman says she “crowds three beds there.” She saved up a little money in the summer for the time when her husband was out of work, and they are a little back in their rent, but they intend paying it. In another house of a labourer, employed at a distance, there are six children under 12, and they are living under the most wretched and squalid conditions. In the courts off Brown’s row there are many of the poorest homes. A labourer with a wife and five children, with the eldest son earning 5s. a week, pay 3s. a week for a four-roomed little house, where the wife says the roof is so leaky that she brought down seven buckets of water one week from the bedrooms. The house is nearly bare of furniture. In a house in another court a mechanic, in partial work, earns from 10s. to 15s. a week, has five children under 12, and pays 3s. 6d. a week for a four-roomed house in bad repair; the wife works all her time at trouser finishing, at 2½d. per pair; and the children are in a sad state of dirt and neglect. In some of the street where decent-looking houses are let to several families, and where no one would expect to find any squalor, we come in contact with cases of the most abject misery. In one of these, off Philip street, a woman separated from her second husband “because he ill-treated her children and refused them food,” is living in a

wretched room with four or five children and is expecting another, but she only has the remains of a bed on the bare floor for the lot, and that is without any covering, while the walls and floor of the bare, cellar-looking place are thick with dirt, and the children half naked. The woman earns a few shillings a week by trouser making, and her eldest daughter 3s. a week at a factory. In another room, where a labourer out of work pays 1s. 3d. a week, the children are nearly naked, and the wife says she has had to take their clothes off and sell them for food.

INDUSTRIOUS STICK-CHOPPERS.

The stick-choppers—especially the women—are amongst the most industrious sections of the community wherever we find them, though the lot of the women and young girls hauling wood home in the wet, kneeling on the stone floor at the chopping from morning to night one day, carrying about the city heavily-laden baskets on their heads the next, and often toiling many miles from door to door, sometimes in wet weather, to return home with only a few coppers. They are a most clannish lot, and here is a whole court of them, where in summer time you may see their sawing stools and chopping blocks out in the open, and their lot is then a much happier one than it is in winter. In too many cases, perhaps, the woman takes the husband's place as the breadwinner, but where the husband cannot get work the industry of the wife often saves the family from pauperism. In one family we visited there are no less than eleven people, including the wife and five children of a labourer (in work), the wife's mother, brother, and sister, and a relation. The adults assist in stick chopping, the children go to school, and they form quite a happy family. In the same court a labourer, in work three days a week, must have a hard struggle of it with seven children, his wife aiding a little by stick chopping; but the sad picture in this home is the appearance of the eldest boy (13 years of age), a cripple, who has never been able to walk, and he crawls along the floor on his side, supporting himself with the backs of his hands. He understands a little what is said to him, and he is evidently treated with great kindness, but here is certainly a case for some benevolent institution. In a three-roomed house occupied by a miner, with wife and two children, and a daughter, with two children, there is little sign of furniture, less of comfort, and no attempt at cleanliness. Two shillings and sixpence per week is paid for three of the rooms, and one of the women says "It would be bad for some on 'em in this court if there was no stick-chopping about."

A HAPPY FAMILY

There are numerous instances of working men, even in the poorest quarters, keeping comfortable homes on very limited earnings with long families. In a five-roomed old-fashioned house, a labourer, paying 4s. a week, lets off one room at 1s. 4d., and has a happy house full of children, for there are nine of them under 13 years. The man is careful and thoughtful of his home. He earns £1 1s. a week, keeps only 1s. for his clothes and pocket money, and though some of the little ones are without shoes, and with nursery, kitchen, living-room, and wash-house all in one, the place is not as clean or tidy as a drawing room, we have rarely seen a more happy family in a poor neighbourhood. Babies have come so frequently that it is necessary to have a snug corner for so permanent an institution in the household; and this has been found on top of the boiler, where a comfortable crib has been formed by a shifting board of mahogany, fastened by bolts into slots in the wall. In this snug boiler-crib the long family, one after another, have been cradled, and here is the last and the biggest of all—a prize baby—a regular "bo'sun," as his proud mother calls him—"sleeping the happy hours away." The happy family have paid their rent so regularly and so long that the landlord—a most exemplary owner of dwellings of the poor—has actually reduced the rent by threepence a week.

THE STRUGGLING POOR.

In one place, where the street and courts are inundated at flood times, three or four houses have been wrecked and others are very damp and here, as elsewhere, we meet with several cases of struggling poor; but we have only space for a few illustrations. A labourer, with wife and six young children, is only getting at present about 6s. a week, has gone back with his rent, and is gradually denuding his home of all his household comforts. A Quay labourer, a teetotalter, gets work about four or five days a week, has wife and six children, pays 2s. a week for three-roomed house, keeps a comfortable little home, and pays 8d. a week in school fees for his children. A labourer on short time has six children, and has just buried one; sends his children to the Ragged School, and has a tidy home. A tanner, with wife and five children, is only in partial work at 14s. a week, but keeps a good home, with his children well clad. Another bright though poor home is that of a steady quarryman, who only gets three or four days work a week, and has a wife and seven children, two of the eldest of whom help the income. A labourer, 50 years of age, in partial work, has five

children, the eldest of whom earns 4s. a week; 2s. 8d. a week is paid for the rent of a very small house, and the labourer says "he gets bread, and when you have said that you have said all." An outside porter at railway stations paying 3s. 6d. a week for four rooms, finds it difficult to "keep his five children clad," but feeds them well. An industrious woman, whose husband has left her for two years, has four children, but she maintains them by trouser making, at 10d. to 1s per pair, pays 3s. for a four-roomed house, and gives houseroom to her aged mother, who has parish pay. A mechanic, out of work, with six children under 13 years of age, pays half a crown a week for half a house, which his industrious wife keeps clean and comfortable, though she works herself; to get the school fees paid she has to send the children a mile and a half to Ashton Gate Board School. A shoemaker, paying 2s. 2½d. a week for a small house, old and crumbling away, "does it down" with yellow ochre twice a year, and this desire for cleanliness is apparent throughout the household, though much misfortune has befallen the family.

There are scores of cases of men out of work. We may mention the following:—A mason's labourer has done nothing for several weeks; a Quay labourer has only earned 9s. in seven weeks, and his wife supports the family of five children by working at a brush factory. A painter has been out of work for 14 weeks, and, with five children, is supported by his wife, who works at trouser making. A hobbler with wife and seven children has earned nothing for a fortnight, and has been obliged to part with several much-prized home comforts. A Quay labourer, paying 1s. 9d. a week for a single room for himself, wife, and two children, says he has only done two days' work in three weeks, and everything is gone from the room but a bed on the floor, two chairs, and a table. A shoemaker, with wife and four children, paying 3s. a week for a four-roomed house, has not averaged 1s. a day since Christmas, and the family could not live but for the earnings of the wife at tailoring. A brushmaker, who used to drink hard, neglect his home, and live in the utmost squalor, has signed the pledge, and having obtained work is gradually getting back some of his furniture. He has a wife and seven children, including twins eleven months old. In one of the darkest, and perhaps the most unhealthy, places off Stillhouse lane, the three-roomed houses are let at 2s. 6d. per week; but even in the day time it is difficult to see to read in the lower rooms. Here are some very poor people; some out of work, others struggling for a living, and in one case a man and his wife living in a house entirely bare of furni-

ture get their livelihood by buying meat tins and melting them down for the solder and selling the old tin. An occupant said to us "It's so dark here it makes one ill." A shipwright, out of work through illness, is now getting better, but has lost his wife and was obliged to recall his daughter from service to look after the household. He has spent a "terrible eight months," and his tidy, comfortable home, and well-cared-for children show how thoroughly his family have been attended to. He has had to depend upon his eldest son, who, however, has been much out of work.

We have already spoken of the remedial agencies amongst the poor of East Bedminster. St. Luke's parish alone has a population of 7445. The church, consecrated in 1861, accommodates nearly 1400 persons. In the St. Luke's Day Schools the numbers on the books are 976 children, and there were no less than 802 present at the recent Government inspection. Dr. Doudney also has a spacious mission hall in William street, worked by the curates and Mr. Lockyer; and a Ragged School, with average attendance of 150 poor children, who twice a week are provided with soup dinners from the excellent soup kitchen close at hand, where soup, made by means of steam boilers, is distributed on Wednesdays and Fridays to the extent of 800 or 900 quarts each day. At the Ragged School we were present at a soup supper to 150 men out of work and old people, to whom Dr. Doudney gave a history of the soup kitchen. The supper, with the gift of 2oz of tea and a loaf of bread, resulted from a present of £5 from an old Bedminster man in Australia. St. Luke's also has a Sunday school of 600 children, mothers' meetings, district visitors, and Bible women; and from Dr. Doudney's "Printing Nursery" many thousands of pamphlets, leaflets, hymns, and volumes are printed for circulation.

We have referred to the valued work of Mr. Henry Kingdon amongst the Bedminster poor in the Sargent Street Mission Chapel (City Mission), where 250 people are accommodated. It was the success of this first mission chapel which led to the erection of others in the city. Connected with it is a Sunday school of 200 very poor children. Mr. Kingdon's self-sacrificing labours during the cholera of 1849, when he himself was attacked while visiting the patients, will long be remembered in Bedminster. For 32 out of the 45 years of work in Bedminster he was secretary of the British Schools with which the late Messrs. Thomas and Richard Drake, with Mr. John Cox, Mr. John Drake, Mr. Capper Pass, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Henry Bennett, Mr. Rider, with

George Thomas, Robert Charlton, and Mr. Langton, are so closely associated. Mr Kingdon has now a colleague in Mr. Cole.

In the newly-made parish of Holy Nativity there is a population of nearly 10,000, and amongst the poor the late pastor, the Rev. R. J. Ives, the Rev. Mr. Ommaoney, and their successors, the Rev. and Hon. Hanbury Tracy and colleagues, work with unremitting zeal. There are from 600 to 800 children in the Sunday school, there are special services for

the children in the evenings, and many active agencies are carried on in connection with the church.

The Nonconformist bodies are very active in East Bedminster, and amongst them we may mention the Bible Christians, on Redcliff crescent; the Wesleyan Chapel, Bushy park, with its Sunday school of 400 children, Bible classes, &c.; the new Baptist Chapel, Totterdown, with its greatly improved room for Sunday school of 260 children; and the United Methodists and Primitive Methodists, Totterdown.



CHAPTER XIII.

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE IN WEST BEDMINSTER.

IN visiting the homes of the poor nothing strikes one more forcibly than the clannishness with which the very poor herd together in particular districts—generally found to be the oldest, the most dilapidated, and the dingiest, though not always the cheapest, dwellings. The most acute poverty in Bedminster is to be found in the districts described last week, where the details gathered in the course of five or six hours spent in one lane and its courts proved depressing enough to give a sombre tone to nearly all we had to describe. This was only natural in places where no sunshine seemed to intermingle with the pervading shadows—where in some blind courts daylight itself was so blocked out that the people complained that “it was too dark to live there”—where, in many a home, hunger haunted them with “perpetual stare,” and their cobweb-sort of existence was passed in shadows so deep that in the bitter struggle to live from week to week their days seemed “covered o’er with grief”—

And sorrows, neither few nor brief,
Veil’d all in gloom.

Stepping outside this special district so densely populated by the very poor, and entering the broad thoroughfares, one breathes more freely as he welcomes the light, though he has not lost touch of much poverty still to be found in bits of old Bedminster, now being swept away by modern streets, and in some cases by new factories which are being erected in West Bedminster. Even in some of the new streets, covered over by a thin film of respectability—if that is the correct word to use for an outward appearance of worldly prosperity or humble comfort—there is much poverty with real want and distress through lack of work; but the tone is brighter, and in most cases the home is not so cheerless and blank. And in by far the larger part of West Bedminster the sunshine of social life brightens the household in welcome contrast to the feeble flickering light which

only deepens the shadows of some of the homes we have left.

Some of the odd-looking bits of ancient Bedminster which we stumble upon in our visits must be over two hundred years old, and were probably built soon after the “village” was burnt down by Prince Rupert during the storming of Bristol by the Parliamentary army in 1645, as soon as the Prince heard of the approach of Fairfax. The walls of some of these old, low-roofed, quaint-looking houses are nearly two feet thick. In “The Paddock,” or East-street place, these remains of the past skirt the old stream—the Malago—which, after burying itself beneath modern streets, shoots under the Causeway through what used to be the “Old Bedminster bridge,” and flows in the open—in its natural channel, about ten feet wide, where this rivulet of the Avon rises and falls with the tide, sometimes to the extent of four or five feet and it still finds its way down to the river. At flood times, it has overflowed the banks and inundated the houses here, and last October twelvemonth, at the last great flood, entering the houses, it extinguished the fires and drove the inmates to the upstairs rooms. Few visitors would suspect the presence of the stream close to the houses on the broad thoroughfare leading from the fine, new, 60ft bridge which now spans the Avon, and it is worth turning into the Paddock to see this rustic street scene, with its curious old dwellings, which are not without a dash of the picturesque. In one corner is quite a miniature farm, a model of cleanliness and well-ordered arrangement, with well-whitelined outbuildings and wire netting and fencing for poultry and pigeons; piggery and stables equally cared for, and the “homestead” itself, with all the rooms on one floor, on the south bank of the Malago, looking as bright and cheery as fresh paint and lively colours can make it. There are also some curious old dwellings in Mill lane, some falling into decay, and in West street many of the most dilapidated are being demolished and supplanted by new houses, a factory,

and new streets in course of construction. Near here, situated on a plateau, in a most healthy spot, commanding views of green fields, and hill and valley, are a few houses left of a group of very old, roughly-made cottages, which, with the boundary walls of their allotments, have fallen into ruins, and the stones of which they were built lie about apparently just as they fell from houses and walls, or project in irregular, jagged, and splintery fragments in the most grotesque fashion from the cottages still standing. These latter are occupied by colliers, and the interiors of some of these humble dwellings are patterns of cleanliness and order—forming a curious contrast to the grim picture of ruin and decay without. And yet we find one of these industrious toilers only earning 17s. a week, and he has a wife and five children, the latter the picture of health and tidiness and good home training. Colliers, spending so much of their time underground, are noted for their love of bright colours, and in one of the oldest of the houses we find the sitting-room adorned with a dado of bright blue paint, edged with faucy border, and above is a wall paper dazzling with coloured flowers. The house itself is well furnished, the sitting-room full of nicknacks and home comforts. In contrast with the gloom of the poorer districts, West Bedminster also has its "Clifton" in attractive Southville; its detached and semi-detached villas and well-built verandah terraces facing the water on Coronation road, its new lines of streets stretching almost into the country, and actually into the fields themselves; while at Windmill hill terrace after terrace rises to the elevated crest where there is one of the most comprehensive views that can be obtained of the whole city, and where the air is said to be as pure as on the sands of Weston itself.

In the last chapter we called attention to the vast growth of Bedminster from 19,429 in 1851 to a population of 46,000 in the present year. The thickly populated parish of St. Luke's, East Bedminster, has its counterpart in West Bedminster in St. Paul's, where many of the new and rapidly filled streets of houses have been built. Here too the Rev. C. J. Atherton, calling the laity to co-operate with him as soon as he was appointed vicar, struck a chord which found a ready response in the hearts of hundreds of the residents of all classes in St. Paul's, Bedminster. The cold shade in which the church seemed to have languished for years disappeared as if by magic before the genial warmth of the active, young, buoyant life displaying itself in every branch of church work, organised by Mr. Atherton and his co-workers with an energy and a success that have not been surpassed by any young growing district in the city. It was

as though a new church had been just opened in St. Paul's. The spacious building was not only filled, but more accommodation was soon needed, with the aid of liberal friends in the city a mission church was built, and day and Sunday schools and other agencies were extended, and the activity and energy in St. Paul's have continued to the present day. The clergy at the old parish church have also been actively engaged in the parish, and the efforts of Nonconformist bodies at Hebron, and Ebenezer, in the Back lane, Zion chapel, Philipstreet, (where there is a special service for ragged school children every Sunday evening), and Essex street chapel, have been supplemented by the most valued aid of the City Mission and the United City Mission. The agents of the latter body are constantly in the humblest homes helping the people with their counsel, and endeavouring

With words of sympathy and song,
To cheer the weary march along
Of the great army of the poor.

But these active missionaries have no funds. They often find their way into dwellings of the very poor unreachd by any other agency, except that of the School Board. Founded on the broadest basis of Christian love and goodwill towards men, they have no special sect by which to draw a limit line to their Christian labours. They silently and unostentatiously work among the poor families, and are welcomed, though they have no money upon which to draw for relief, often so urgently needed that we have known them give help in pressing need from their own pockets. There is this special difficulty in working amongst the absolutely destitute, who sometimes scarcely know where to turn for a crust of bread. And with all the remedial agencies at work, in a population exceeding that of many good-sized towns, there is still something wanted to lift some of the poor out of their abject misery at a time when on every hand there are complaints that work is so scarce that hundreds of men can only get two or three days a week.

A PITEOUS STORY OF WANT.

Here in the third case we visited last week in a court off East street, not far from the Causeway, is a sad story of want and misery. In a small two-roomed house, a labourer in partial work, paying 3s. a week rent, has a wife with seven children under 16 years of age. While the husband was out of work nearly all the furniture was sold for food, and in the living room there are only three shattered tables which would not realise any money, a piece of old looking-glass tied to

the wall with rope, a chair, and two stools. The husband had three days' work last week and earned 8s., enabling him to pay 1s 6d. of the rent, otherwise the wife feared they would have had to sell the few things left in the home. The wife, a thinly-clothed, sorrow-stricken woman, with a baby fifteen months old at her breast, seeking the nourishment which she tells us she has not got for him through want of sufficient food herself, is surrounded by five of the poorly-clad, dejected-looking children, twelve, nine, six, and four years of age. One girl of 15 nurses a child for a neighbour, and receives one shilling a week, and the eldest daughter is learning a branch of the brush making at a factory where she earns a little money, but last week it was only one shilling. It is Wednesday morning and the husband has obtained a job of work, but will not be paid till Friday or Saturday, and the wife, who, as we entered the house, was just about to send one of the children to sell, for food, two ginger beer bottles, which she had carefully placed in a broken basket, says: "They had no food this morning except a few crusts the neighbours gave them, and, as they cried for more, I was going to try to sell the two bottles. We have sold nearly everything, and the children took the sheet and put it away for a shilling a fortnight ago, and there is nothing now on the bed more than you can put on your hand. We had nothing at all in house this morning, and I stewed the tea leaves over again for them and myself, and the baby (who has evidently had a mother's loving care) is dragging me for nothing at all now. A relation in the country sent us a few potatoes early in the week, and I had to go in debt for the saucepan that we boiled them in, and we had a half-quartern of bread and some potatoes a day till now. The poor little things—when their stomachs are empty and they goes to bed with only a few rags to lie down on, it isn't much rest for 'em. They hav'n't been to school since Christmas, and I hav'n't anything to send them in—no shoes; and I hav'n't any shoes to go out in myself, if I could get out to earn anything, and I could not send them to school without food. I have sold my own linen off my back and their pinafores for bread for 'em. My husband, who is a steady man and don't drink at all, used to get 15s. a week; but he hav'n't had that for many months now—work is so short." The poor woman, having got over the difficulty about parting with the bottles, assured us that in her case she had never had any assistance except from neighbours and kind persons about there, who saved their crumbs and crusts for the children, "because she had such a long family." She was grateful for any trifling assistance, and a companion who was with us, know-

ing that there was everything to confirm her sad story, gave the children tickets for a dinner at Canterbury hall out of a fund of which Mr. Mark Whitwill, the chairman of the School Board, has some administration. The appearance of the destitute home was sufficient to win the sympathy of anyone, and the child four years of age, who looked in better condition than the others, proved to be a favourite in the court, and often "picked up a bit of food" from the kind neighbours.

In a decent-looking street of four-roomed houses off Mill lane there is also much poverty, and the houses, at 4s. a week, are in many cases let to two families. In the case of a labourer, out of work for months, the wife, who has four children, says she does not know how they have lived at all sometimes. They have gone back in the rent, and last week her husband only earned 3s. Up to Wednesday in the current week he has only earned sixpence one day and nothing the next. The children, who look only half-fed, had only "half-a-round of bread" three times in the day, except what the neighbours gave them. A widow and two children live in one of the rooms, and a woman and her husband in the fourth room. In another case, a labourer, in only partial work, earning from 4s. to 7s. a week, has a wife and six children, the eldest boy, 14 years of age, earning 4s. a week. They rent a house at 4s., and let off one room at 1s. a week. Most of the furniture has been sold for food, and on the morning of our visit the wife had washed-out and ironed the children's nightclothes and sold them to get them bread for breakfast. She was afraid, if more work did not turn up soon, she "should go out of her mind." She got a bit of plain sewing, and earned sixpence one day, or she did not know what they would have done. The house was in a bad condition, the ceiling of the living room falling in, and the adjoining room occupied by a man in partial work, with wife and three children living and sleeping there, was still worse and the children in a shocking state. In one very gloomy home a labourer, out of work after being ill for months, has found employment at Salisbury, and his wife and six children, some of the latter only half clad, are going to make an effort to reach him. The condition of the house, which is on a big thoroughfare, was one which shows the misery to which the family have been reduced during a long period of privation. In a curious old-fashioned house, with deep recesses in the massive walls, a labourer, who has met with an accident at a coalpit during his wife's confinement a month ago, has not been able to work since, and the whole family, man, wife, and six children, are relieved by the parish. In one very bare home, where

a clean sweep appeared to have been made of all the furniture, a labourer, out of work for a month, has eight children. The floor of the empty living room is clean and sanded, and a girl of ten, who is in charge, says her mother has had two good homes cleared of the furniture, and she supposes now "she will never get another." The children are very poorly clad, and there home life must be a dreary blank, to which the enforced attendance at school must be a relief. In a court off West street, a labourer, deaf and dumb, finding himself out of work here, obtained a free passage to America, and has found employment there. His wife, who has four or five children, goes out to work, leaving a sharp, intelligent little girl of eight years to keep home. The children are well kept, and the small housekeeper is full of concern for her little sister, whom she tells us she has ill in bed. The invalid is in a roughly-extemporised crib on a chair by the fire, and is evidently receiving the most watchful attention at the hands of the tiny housekeeper. In another case, where the children look exceedingly well cared for, a labourer only earns 9s. to 10s. a week, and pays 3s. a week for a three-roomed house, where he has a wife and four children, whose condition contrasts favourably with that of the younger children of a labourer in a similar position, but who has two of his children grown up and doing nothing. In one court of the most dilapidated houses we have seen in Bedminster, the floors are damp, the walls crumbling to pieces, and the children of the occupants look as dilapidated as the houses, and some are running about ragged, shoeless, and "happy." Their homes, however, are most bare and poor. The dwellings have four rooms, and the rent is 3s. a week. One of these houses we find horribly dirty, and a boy of six is left home to mind the younger children who have the most squalid appearance. In the porch of one house a donkey has been kept, and the place is in a filthy condition, and seems to be rapidly falling into ruins. In a house near the court the children of a labourer out of work are left at home entirely neglected, the eldest, ten years of age, being in charge of five others, and they are half naked and dirty and uncared for.

A GIPSY CAMP-KITCHEN.

One of the happiest, the brightest, and most cheery homes we visited was that of a young mother, whose well-defined features, dark complexion, relieved with the ruddy glow of health, jet black hair, and eyes sparkling with fun and merriment, suggested a Spanish descent, or a close association with the travelling Zingari who live in tents or vans, and

know little of the squalor of big towns. Her home was an old-fashioned, thick-walled cabin, sufficiently close to the banks of a stream to smack of a country life; and the kitchen interior was as picturesque as a gipsy tent in a country lane. One side of the room was arched with the canvas head or hood of a van; beneath this was the scrupulously-clean bed, and bolstered and propped up in the centre of soft pillows was the baby crowing at his mother, as she was doing the domestic washing with a buoyancy of spirit and light-heartedness which would drive any amount of dull care away. The room was bright with coloured pictures, the mother had cleared a space in the centre for her work so that she should have full view of the fat, sleek-faced, merrily-crowling child, and interspersing her conversation with any number of quaint sayings and "wise saws," she displayed an exuberance of spirit and playful overflow of humour which we had not found in one case in fifty in the humble dwellings hitherto visited. Her husband was travelling with some horses. As the visitors leave her she gives them a parting hit of sage advice as to the secret of happiness in this life, and quaintly reminds us in words suggestive of the "business" of a gipsy fair that "It will be all one price in the next world."

The wife of a labourer in work, with seven children, living near the dwelling just described, is too overweighted with care to have any share in the merry Zingara's piquancy and brightness; and the home is dull and dreary, compared with the gay and picturesque "camp kitchen;" it is difficult to keep the children's clothes as they should be, and the poor woman, though she has to pay only 2s. a week for rent, complains that she has to pay the school fees. Another labourer in work has wife and four children, and pays 2s. 6d. for one of these houses having three rooms, but he complains that they are damp. Some of the cabins have patches of garden, with fowls' runs close to the stream, and in one kitchen of a house occupied by a labourer in partial work the pigeons are assigned permanent quarters with the family, and the fowls stray in and out as freely as they wander over a farm barton. They are magnificent birds, and are evidently prized by their owner, who has always been fond of the feathered tribe from his youth up. He has brought up a long family of twelve children, has only two left at home, and in the good times when work was plentiful he used to live in a far better house, where he paid 5s. 6d. a week. His daughter, 15 years of age, could get a situation at once if she could obtain suitable clothes; but just now, with work so short, it is difficult to do so.

POVERTY IN THE NEW STREETS.

A feature of the homes of the poor in West Bminster is the keen, biting poverty to be found in the new streets, where, with plenty of light and air and the outward appearance of comfort and ease, there is not the squalor to be found in the dim courts and alleys, but the struggle to live is none the less keen. Many of the very poor from the old dwellings demolished in Redcliff parish, and those people perhaps who have emancipated themselves from the gloom of the courts, have found their abode in these new cheaply-built houses, in some of which there are families in almost every room; and in others the house is divided between two families, each paying about 2s 6d a week for three rooms—one of the best conditions under which the struggling poor seem able to live. Even here the poorest will instinctively keep together; and while ear fully trained plants, bright curtains, and bits of lace seen through scrupulously clean windows indicate houses occupied by single families in moderately comfortable circumstances on one side of a street, one only has to cross the way to find the darker side of the picture in dust-covered windows, rooms nearly bare, and children poorly clad, and sometimes without shoes to their feet. In many cases families in the very depth of poverty will keep their rooms faultlessly clean. Here is one in which a labourer, who has been in the Hospital for a month and is still laid up with a painful illness which prevents his working, is occupying one room with his two daughters, 11 and 14 years of age. The elder daughter is anxious to get a place of service, as the family are in receipt of relief (5s. and two loaves); 1s 6d a week has to be paid for the room, and 1s. a week for coals. The father and two girls live and sleep in the one room, which is totally bare of furniture, except a bed placed in one corner of the floor, but the place is clean, and one of the girls, whom we see, is dressed as neatly and tidily as the child of a well-to-do family. All the furniture has gone for rent long ago, and the picture of this blank home within the shadow of the workhouse is most pitiable. In contrast with its cleanliness is the dust-coated and dirt-encrusted dwelling of a family of several squalid-looking children and their mother, whose husband is in constant work. They formerly lived on the more respectable side of the street, but complaints as to the neglected state of their house, which proved offensive even to the neighbours, led to the interference of the landlord, and they left the place in a condition which the landlord's agent described as "something horrible." This squalor, however, is exceptional in

the new streets, where, if work were not so scarce, many of the poor would have comfortable homes. In one rather small room, we find a young labourer and his wife and two children, the infant only eight weeks old. The man only gets about two days' work a week, and earns 6s. or 7s., and pays 1s. 6d. a week for the room. Furniture and bedclothes have been sold for food when the husband was out of work, and the only blanket on the bed has been lent during the wife's illness; and but for a bag of clothing lent her by the kind mission agent, she could have made no preparation whatever for the birth of the infant. When she is able to get about she does a little work, and the young couple are bravely struggling against adversity in this "one-room dwelling," in a street where one would little suspect the battle of life was so hard. Here is another case, in which a widow, who was left with six children, has made a successful struggle and avoided all help from the parish. Her eldest boy, 19, is now at sea, her second, 16, has been out of work for seven weeks, and a lad of 14 earns 3s. a week. Though in ill-health, she has supported the family—with the aid of the elder children's earnings—by waistcoat-making, at from 5d. to 7d each waistcoat; and she pays 2s. 3d a week for two rooms, and has a comfortable, well-kept home. A picture of industry is the home of a labourer, with a wife and seven children, two of whom earn a trifle. The husband earns 18s. a week, and the wife, who makes trousers, often works from early morning till late at night. The school fees have lately been raised, and she now pays 9d. a week for three of the children's education. She occupies half a six-roomed house at 2s. 6d. a week. Her companion working with her has five children under ten years, and though her husband is only in partial work, she pays 9d. a week school fees and 2s 6d. for half the house. In another six-roomed house two families of miners divide the dwelling between them, one family consisting of eight and the other of seven persons. In some houses in the new streets there are three families, and in others the single rooms are let furnished at 3s. 6d. a week for a front and 3s. for a back room. In an unfurnished room at 1s 6d. a week we find a labourer, who, with wife and three children, has only obtained a day and half's work a week since Christmas, and he says he has never known work so slack round the Quay as it has been since December last.

THE LEGEND OF A HAUNTED HOUSE.

Widely-diffused education is rapidly dispelling any lingering belief in ghosts and unearthly visitants, while hobgoblins and wicked sprites are reserved for

nursery story-books or the cleverly-constructed scenes of a Christmas pantomime. But here and there we come upon isolated cases of a belief in "haunted houses" in very poor neighbourhoods, and two of these occur in Bedminster. In one case in a comparatively modern street nearly all the houses are let, and are crowded chiefly with poor families; but one dwelling has been vacant for two years. The windows are coated with dust and cobwebs; and the place altogether looks as though it had been untouched by any one for years. No one will occupy it, and on asking the reason we are told that there is a very prevalent belief that it is "haunted." In another case an old house remained void a considerable time owing to a superstitious belief that at certain times at night flitting about the rooms could be seen the shadowy figure of an old lady, a former occupant, who, according to local rumour, was drowned one boisterous night while crossing the ferry, and was carried out to sea. One family who ventured to take it soon gave up the keys, and said they could not stop there as they heard at night "a rumbling noise upstairs," and once when one of them, more courageous than the rest, darted out, he thought he saw a figure standing in the passage, and "it suddenly passed out into the street." Another family stayed a short time, and then left for some trifling reason. It was not till within the past month that the active agent succeeded in letting it again, the prejudice against the place having now been overcome, and the absurd ghost-belief having gradually died out or been laughed down.

VERY HUMBLE SHOPPING.

The problem as to "how the poor live" will probably never be solved, but a curious phase of it is revealed in a shopkeeper's diary, which came into the hands of the Rev. Dr. Doudney. The very poor not only literally "live from hand to mouth," but in hundreds of cases purchase—doubtless in the very dearest way—every meal as the time comes round—and only too often, as we have shown, they have to go without a meal altogether. The curious little diary before us shows that one poor family bought "a halfpenny worth of tea and a halfpenny worth of sugar" regularly four times a day. The day's purchase of another poor household consisted of tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; pickled cabbage, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; cheese, 1d.; and a loaf of bread. Here is a more pretentious order:—2oz of butter, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; quarter pound of treacle; ha'porth of soap; soda, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; ha'porth of mustard; vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; pennyworth of coal; a halfpenny candle; and farthing box of matches. Every halfpenny has to be eked out with the nicest care, though the poor people could pur-

chase far more economically if they had the means of buying in their week's stock.

ART IN A LODGING HOUSE KITCHEN.

There are only two or three common lodging-houses in Bedminster, and they are old-fashioned places that have flanked the highway almost for centuries, if one may judge from the massive old walls and the low-roofed, quaint-looking rooms. Dropping into the kitchen of one of these on a drizzling night, we find some dozen "travellers" and street hawkers, most of them dripping wet by toiling through the streets all day trying to sell their wares. Before the blazing fire they are warming and drying themselves, and it must be admitted—though some of them, with no dinners to cook, look despondent—the travellers' kitchen looks far more cheerful than many homes we have visited in the day. The "travellers" and the hawkers keep fashionable hours for dinner, and it is only after the business and the bartering of the day that they sit down to their chief meal—often a substantial one, if fortune has been on their side. But "business" on this particular day has been dull. What with the "exzitement" about the departure of the Prince of Wales after his recent visit to the city, and the drizzling rain all day, little money has turned in, and one young woman and her mate, who are sharing a plate of devilled mutton between them, complain that they "havn't taken a copper all day." The fountain is steaming on the hob, and some of the other weary ones who have not raised enough money for dinner are having tea. Down the centre of the ceiling is a line from which are suspended clusters of bright wax flowers, whose petals seemed so perfectly formed that we are scarcely surprised to hear our companion ask for the "flower artist." A lithe, active young fellow, with black hair and keen, penetrating eyes, responds, and is at once delighted to find anyone interested in his work. He runs up to his bedroom and brings down a perfect bouquet of wax flowers, or rather, as he ventures to explain, they are a mixture of paper and wax, more durable than wax alone. The colours are gay, but the flowers are well grouped and disposed with much taste; and the artist says on a fine day he can get 3s. for such a bouquet in Clifton, and they would charge double for them in the shops! His combination of industry and art is certainly surprising, seeing that his only workshop is the lodging-house kitchen, his bench, the rough table, and his only tools, a piece of bent wood and a penknife.

With reference to the impression existing amongst the Bedminster poor it is right to state that the Guardians pay annually a large amount in school fees, and they assert that their scale of relief is more liberal than in other unions.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRANDEUR IN DECAY AT THE HOTWELLS.

SOME three months ago, in undertaking the work now drawing to a close, a thoughtful friend warned us that in any prolonged description of the homes of the poor and their mode of living the investigation would necessarily involve such a constant repetition of the same circumstances that the task as we proceeded would prove dull, if not monotonous. But the conditions under which the poor live, directly influenced as those conditions are by the widely-differing surroundings of the several localities, have proved so infinitely varied that each populous district of the city has yielded fresh points of interest, with new phases of the many-sided question of the housing of the poor. And this most fully applies to the district now under notice. In passing the quays flanking the harbour, and journeying down the Hotwell road, the visitor less than a quarter of a century ago would have noted on one side one of the finest stretches of harbour in the kingdom, crowded with shipping; and on the other continuous lines of shops filled

With all the long detail of various arts
That tend on mariners' adventurous trade.

On the far side the harbour, and down towards the Hotwells itself, shipyard after shipyard was thronged with busy workers, and "amid the clamours of clattering hammers" many a stately ship rose from the keelson to be launched amidst lusty cheers from thousands of voices whose happy owners more or less depended on the thriving shipbuilding industry of the ancient port. In the place where two such steamers as the *Great Western* and the *Great Britain*, costing together £160,000, had been launched, the shipbuilding trade might well have been expected to hold its own; but at the very time that every far-seeing enterprise and united action were needed to run the race with other ports, Bristol, with divided counsels and conflicting interests, stood passive. This important adjunct to the trade of a large port was allowed to fritter away, and—as is well known—down to this moment, when

the want of work presents the most startling problem to be solved in questions affecting the very poor—this blow to Bristol industry has left her staggering, if not prostrate. Under these circumstances, it is, perhaps, not surprising that most of the "work-famine" and complaints of want of work with which we have become acquainted during the past three months have been more or less connected with the shipping. Over and over again we have been told by quay labourers, "Why, when there's a ship in, there's enough men to carry her away, instead of only discharging her cargo." The blow especially affected the dwellers and shopkeepers at the Hotwells. Many of the workmen left, with their families, for the more active northern ports, others lingered in semi-poverty here, and a whole district suffered keenly. It is most gratifying now to be able to record a growing revival of the shipbuilding art in the port in the recent launches of two or three fine iron vessels. Others are on the stocks, and we hope we may look forward to the time when upwards of a thousand men will again be numbered in one shipbuilding yard of a city whose pride and boast it was once to be the second port in the whole kingdom. Though the shops still line the road, the tradesmen must find a marked difference, if we may judge from the poverty which we find in the homes of many of the poor in the courts and terraces that, in the rear of the shops, rise hillward one above another till they reach "World's End" lane and "Gibraltar Rock" well-named from the bold escarpment to which the dwellings there seem to cling.

Before dealing with the homes just alluded to, we will pass on to Lower Clifton proper—the famous "Hotwells," where the once stately houses of the wealthy and the great are now let out in single-room tenements to families—the "lets" in one house reaching twenty!—while in one nobly-proportioned room, where luxury formerly reigned supreme over a gay mansion full of "light and music and high swelling hearts," we

found last week a family in want of a bit of bread, and one woman was sleeping on a sack on the bare floor ! "The light of other days" has sadly faded at the Hotwells. Two centuries and half ago its thermal spring, which made it the resort of rank and fashion, "never wanted good store of company to wash in the well and to drink of its medicinale water." Pope, who visited it in 1739, naturally was more impressed with the lovely scenery, which he poetically describes as seen from the old Hotwell House then enclosing the spring. Amongst the visitors there about the years 1752-3 were the Bishops of Athol, Durham, Worcester, and Hereford ; the Earls of Moleworth, Jersey, Oxford, and Weymouth ; the Duke of Chandos, the Countess of Huntingdon, Lord Villiers, Lady Arundel, and others. In the latter part of the last century the fashionable reputation of the place was at its height. The wealthy had their mansions in Dowry square and the terraces rising up the steep ascent to Clifton — fashionable lodging houses picturesquely dotted the hill slopes and fringed the river. Ann Yearsley, the rustic poetess, kept a circulating library at the colonnade ; and every morning during "the season" a band played in the pump room of Hotwell House while fashionable invalids were taking the water—six glasses a day being the prescribed quantity. So many were sent there in the last stages of mortal illness, and so many died, that Southey tells us the same people who kept the hotels furnished the funerals—thus not only entertaining patients while living, but in order that they might "accommodate them all through" they buried them when they were dead. And he naturally wondered that this scene of disease and death should be a place of amusement where idlers of fashion resorted to spend the summer, mingle in the Pump Room and in the walks with the dying, and have their card parties and dances within the sound of every passing bell for the departed. Doubtless some then, as now, were attracted by the romantic scenery over which, enthroned in the mighty cliffs stern St. Vincent "reigned monarch of the glen." Mr. John Taylor, in his interesting work on Clifton and neighbourhood, reminds us that Chatterton came there to have his poetic feelings stirred by the grandeur and beauty of the Avon gorge, as shown by his following noble lines :—

Yon rugged rocks, that from the streams arise
In rude rough grandeur, threat the distant skies,
Seem as if Nature, in a painful throe,
With dire convulsions labouring to and fro,
To give the boiling waves a ready vent,
At one dread stroke the solid mountain rent ;
The high cleft rocks transmit to distant fame
The sacred gilding of a good man's name.

But the healing waters seemed the great excuse for the assemblies of fashion, and William Coombe, author of "Dr. Syntax in search of the Picturesque," says in "The Philosopher in Bristol," written while he was staying at the Hotwells :—"At the hour when health called her votaries to the fountain, I looked out and saw many hastening thither. There was youth already grown old, and beauty withered ere it had bloomed. I beheld the middle-aged striving to secure age, and the old as anxious after life as if it was a new thing and they had never enjoyed a moment of it ; and amongst those on horseback I saw ladies hoisted on pillions behind their servants." Within living memory carriages blocked the road to the famous Gloucester hotel on the occasion of a grand ball given in its stately Assembly Room. But rank and fashion have long deserted Hotwells, and taken themselves to the heights above, where noble crescents and stately homes adorn the fashionable suburb of Clifton. The Hotwells Spa and Pump Room have disappeared, and in the spacious chambers of once luxurious mansions, where votaries of fashion have toyed and dallied their time away, poverty stricken people are now receiving parish relief, or are fighting the battle of life keenly for a crust of bread. The healing powers of the famous well have become almost mythical, and the spring itself has been entombed by a thoughtful and order-loving Corporation in a sort of monumental recess or cave left in the rocks by the march of river improvements ; and there during our visit we saw the old man in charge pondering over a tract, like a hermit in his cell, with a modern stove or kitchen reflecting a ruddy glow behind the fountain associated with so many memories of the past. Following a respectful distance after the fashion of a bygone period, "the people" seized on the Hotwells as a popular resort—not for the tepid water—but attracted by the romantic charm of the spot and the enchanting variety of moving pictures to be found there of a summer evening, as some stately barque would "downward glide"

Where flows old Avon's dusky tide,
Between two banks of wooded pride.

The tea gardens, with sylvan nooks and bowers beneath the hanging woods of Leigh, were crowded with gay holiday keepers, while omnibuses running every quarter of an hour—before the advent of trams—conveyed hundreds to the gay promenade on the west side of the old lock of the basin—quite a favourite spot in the old days. Complaints were made of the frequenters of the tea gardens being rather boisterous in their mirth, and the construction of the Portishead Railway ruthlessly swept these tea

bowers away and destroyed one of the most accessible and ready means of outdoor enjoyment Bristol people had within reach. The construction of the new lock and the river side improvements cut away picturesquely situated houses and favourite spots on the north side of the river at Rowham, and contributed still more to denude the Hotwells of its 'vantage spots where the citizens formerly passed many a pleasant hour. The Corporation have railed in a space, it is true, and planted a few young trees, but even the remains of this once favourite place of resort have for years been left in a condition of unsightly ugliness which is lamentable to witness. Where neat dwellings once lined the way, on the water front strips of timber or rail-enclosed spaces of all sorts of shapes and angles have been left, exposing the back slums and the rough-pieced and patchworked sections of houses where the line of salvage abruptly broke in; and there is left to view from the water side an indescribable mass of dingy and grimy bricks and mortar, forming neither fronts nor backs of houses, and showing so many rough seams and blotches that the places look "wrong side out." A melancholy spectacle of faded greatness is the Gloucester Hotel, now forming a most unmilitary looking recruiting depot or barracks. But the Hotwells is worth "cultivating," and the place offers a simple, pure, and elevating means of enjoyment for the people—just what is wanted at the present time when efforts are being made on all hands to afford the masses means of innocent enjoyment. A great deal could be effected by simply "tidying-up" the spots left by the salvages; but some additional seats and a further planting of trees would improve matters, and other things might suggest themselves if efforts were made in this direction.

THE POOR IN LARGE HOUSES.

But let us enter one of the big houses of which we have been speaking. It is an eight or ten roomed house, with central door and large entrance hall; but it has a very faded look outside, and its outward dinginess does not belie its inward poverty and forlorn state. It is let out in tenements, and there are twenty-six people in the house, in one room a hobbler, wife and five children, one of whom is a girl of eighteen; in another room a husband, wife, and two young girls; another, a husband and wife; a fourth, widow and daughter; another, a husband and wife; a sixth room is tenanted by a husband, wife, and four children; and two rooms are occupied by a widow and her boy and little girl. The hobbler has been out of work for a month, during which the rent,

2s. 6d. a week, has been going back. The eldest girl, 18 years old, out of a situation, helps her mother chop sticks when they can get any. The room is about 20ft. square, and looks wofully blank, as the big space of floor is entirely without furniture. In the corner towards the fireplace there is an old bedstead, and on the ground near it a grimy-looking old sack on which a woman, apparently tired with travelling, has thrown herself for rest without waiting to take off her bonnet. We are informed that she is "the husband's sister's mother-in-law," and that she came in on a visit very tired. She has come, however, at an unfortunate time, for the poor hostess of the big room assures us that up to date (Wednesday) in the current week they have only been able to buy two cwt. of wood, out of which they made 1s. 6d., and having consumed both capital and profit they were unable to buy any more wood to chop. They had "only half a loaf between the lot of them all that day, and it was not living—it was lingering." The children, though poorly clad enough, did not look as though they had had many days like that; but Jenny, an under-sized boy of twelve, quickly consented to go for a loaf—his mother, with calculating thoughtfulness as to its "lasting out," calling to him as he left the door; "Mind—a stale one, Jenny!"

In another old roomy house in a street having quaint old courts packed away behind its front dwellings, we find the rooms let out in tenements, at from 1s. 3d. to 3s. 1d., a room, the extra penny being added for water. Some of the smaller rooms are occupied by very old people, who are thus comfortably housed with their little domestic treasures and ornaments and old china, the collection of a lifetime. The larger rooms are let to families, and in one or two instances one family possesses two rooms. This is the case with a labourer in work, his wife, and six children. The wife says he has been out of work for three weeks, but he has now obtained employment, and they pay 3s. a week for the two rooms, which are well kept. In only a few cases in these large airy rooms will dirt and grime be found, the very fact of the people having plenty of elbow room and light apparently exercising a most wholesome influence. At one time the street of which we are speaking had an evil reputation, but with the many remedial agencies at work in the neighbourhood it has greatly improved of late years; and even where there is still some improvidence and lack of thrift, and a tendency to "drown dull care" in what used to be the orthodox fashion, there is far more cleanliness in these homes than is to be found in dim and close courts where the inmates yield to similar temptation. Here is the case of a quay labourer getting about three days'

work a week, and paying 2s. 3d. for two rooms. His wife and four children, though poorly clothed, look well fed, and the room, though bare of furniture, which has been sold when the husband was out of work, is clean. In an adjoining room a tenant is anticipating matters by "having a good spring clean." High up in a tenement house the wife of a mechanic, out of work till three weeks ago, has two large rooms at 3s. 6d. per week for herself, husband, and children. The walls of the room are decorated with many pictures, the whole place has an air of comfort, the wife, a comely matron between fifty and sixty, is well dressed and enjoying a four o'clock tea, which she has anticipated by one of Mrs. Gamp's "leastest drops;" and striking an attitude with one hand on hip, while the other is raised with a saucer of steaming tea, which is waved with a sort of festive flourish, she assures us, in a weak falsetto, and grotesquely melo-dramatic air, that "It's never too late to mend." In another case a quay labourer and son (17) get on the average only two days' work a week. Three and sixpence per week is paid for three rooms, and there are eight in family altogether, one of the daughters earning 1s. 6d. a week. The scantily-furnished room suggests little of real home comfort, but the bare floor is kept clean by the industrious wife, who, as in many cases at the Hotwells, helps out the family income by laborious work at the washtub.

Some of the finest houses even in Dowry square are let out in single tenements, and as a rule these are occupied by more thriving people, and the houses—at any rate those we visited—are kept in excellent order. One of the best of them, a splendid mansion, in excellent condition outside and in, with large hall and fine staircase, is let in tenements from basement to dove-cote, each door numbered as in the case of street doors in a thoroughfare. But the place throughout is as clean and bright as fresh paint, cheerfully toned hall paper, and daily sweeping and scrubbing can make it. Doubtless good landlords make good tenants, and *vice versa*, but evidently no unthrifty, objectionably dirty family could enter here. Considering that there are nearly twenty lets, and the place from top to bottom is as scrupulously clean as the wards and corridors of a great medical institution, and as sweet as the mansion of the most fastidious sanitarian in fashionable Clifton, it is well worth a morning's journey to visit. And yet even here we find a mechanic, a mason, who is a member of a chapel, and has the reputation of being a most reliable man, has been out of work for seven weeks. He has a wife and seven children, the eldest of whom, a boy 16 years old,

earns a little; but 5s. a week has to be paid for the three rooms occupied, and if it were not for the assistance of the wife during this special time of dearth of work it would be a sad thing for this deserving family. As it is the weekly struggle must be a hard one indeed; and we afterwards had the assurance of a minister who knew the case, that the conclusion arrived at was correct, that this was an exemplary family living in this model "industrial dwelling." High up, in the dove-cote itself, lives an old lady, hale, hearty and industrious at 83!

POVERTY IN THE COURTS.

With the active personal ministrations of the Rev. A. R. Tucker, of St. Andrew's the Less, the Rev. F. W. Brown, of Hope Chapel, and the Rev. C. H. Wallace, of Trinity, aided by visiting ladies of their congregation and from Clifton very many of the homes of the poor at the Hotwells are constantly visited and advice and assistance often given. And with these Christian agencies working in thorough harmony much good work is done, and a great improvement has been effected in many a home. But there is much keen poverty in the courts consequent upon shortness of work, though, as a rule, this poverty does not present itself in so aggravated a form as in Bedminster and St. Philip's, doubtless owing to the quay labourers having the advantage of living in the neighbourhood of their work and being on the spot whenever it turns up. In one instance we find a quay labourer who is fortunate in getting good work paying 6s. a week for a good-sized four-roomed house, where he has a family of six children. In a dark court, hemmed in with houses, a labourer, who has only earned 7s. 5d. in seven weeks, has a wife and six children, and pays 3s. a week for a three-roomed house, which has been left very bare owing to the family having been driven to the necessity of getting rid of furniture and other things for food. They have "gone back in the rent" some weeks, and the morning of our visit the wife had to pledge the dress of one little girl to obtain the day's food. The poor woman is expecting the birth of another child, and appears in much distress. She hopes her husband, who is a steady man, will soon get some work; but he often goes down to Avonmouth and back without earning a penny. One girl of 14 gets 1s. 6d. a week; four of the children go to the Board School, and for these, owing to the destitute state of the family, the School Board remits the fees. In a brighter-looking court near this, a labourer out of work, with wife and three children, pays 2s. a week for a single room, where his wife has just given birth to their last child. For the only

other room in the same house, a young married couple pay 1s. 6d. a week rent; and in a two-roomed cottage adjoining, a labourer, with wife and four children, pays 3s. 3d. rent, and has a comfortable little home, the walls having been papered and "done down" by the tenant, both wife and husband being thrifty, industrious, persevering people. In another court a labourer, who has been out of work for a fortnight, has wife and five children, and pays 4s. 6d. a week for a six-roomed house, two rooms of which he sub-lets at 1s. 3d. and 1s. 1d. a week. The place is so damp that the water is exuding from the walls, but the wife, while pointing out this, says—It's no use to think of getting another dwelling while the work is scarce; her husband has only had one day this week, and she has to go out to get some work herself. Other cases present themselves in which want of work is causing much poverty at the Hotwells; and one poor woman, barely clad with a skirt and old woollen jacket, laments that owing to her husband, a quay labourer, having scarcely any work at all for the last two months, she has had to strip her house of all her pictures and home comforts. In many of these cases of want of work, where there is a family of children, the circumstances having been thoroughly investigated, the School Board remits the fees. Here is an instance in which a labourer, only getting three days' work a week on coal vessels and barges, has a sick wife, with seven children under 15; he pays 3s. 8d. a week for a four-roomed house, and lets off one room at 1s. a week, and under the straitened circumstances of the family the school fees have to be remitted. In a court of twelve three-roomed houses, rent 3s. a week, seven out of ten or twelve labourers are out of work, or only getting a couple of days' employment a week; and one family, where the husband has been out of work "since the week before Christmas," are in receipt of relief. One labourer, with wife and five young children, only gets two days' work a week, and the wife, as in numerous cases of this kind, helps materially to maintain the family by working as a charwoman; and the school fees of the children have to be paid by the School Board. Contrasting with this is the case of a lucky labourer in work, paying 4s. a week for four rooms, 1s. a week for a boy at the truant school, and 4d. a week for two others at the Board School, and his wife keeps a comfortable home. In one house near this there were 19 persons living in five rooms, and many of them are very poor through want of work, and the tone of the home is much lower. In an old four-roomed house—good-sized rooms—off the Hotwell road live 20 persons—husband, wife, and five children, one room,

at 2s. a week; husband, wife, and four children, one room, at 2s.; and husband, wife, and three children, two rooms, at 2s. 6d. a week; and the happy possessor of the two rooms is a street musician. By a combined effort of the clergy and others connected with some of the parishes, aided by benevolent persons at Clifton, good soup is distributed twice a week, and is supplied to poor families at a nominal cost, and it proves very acceptable.

WANT AND SQUALOR UP ALOFT.

A distinctive feature of the housing of the poor in the Hotwell district is to be found in the old-fashioned cottages quaintly situated in the angles of zigzag steps and dingy quadrangles, interspersed with bright and open little squares and terraces approached from the Hotwell road, but entirely concealed from view, though, behind the houses, they crowd the hill side till they reach the high level of the background between Clifton Wood, near St. Peter's Church, and Trinity Church lower down the road. Some of these thickly-planted dwellings rise one above the other so closely that the foundations of one block or square come out flush with the roofs of those beneath them, and in strips of gardens there are beds of healthy looking vegetables surrounded by the tiles and chimneys of the houses on the next level. Some of these dwellings on the height towards World's End lane and "Gibraltar Rock" are new higher class houses, well cared for and kept in capital condition, and are tenanted by well-to-do people, and from this spot, just below Clifton Wood crescent, there is a grand view of hill and dale trending away to Dundry and across the wooded meadows of Ashton to Leigh. Labourers and mechanics in work also have healthily-situated, comfortable homes on some of these high terraces, where for years they have lived and successfully cultivated little gardens. But in others the poverty is severe enough, and in some on the middle and lower levels families here and there can be found on the border line of want and squalor. The floors of these very old places have in many cases long ago given way, and they are roughly pieced and patched. The old-fashioned wainscoting which lines the walls gets a bit of white lime or ochre now and then, but in the oldest of the huts the rats abound, and one man told us he "could hardly sleep at night for the noise made by these unwelcome intruders." In several cases, where the men are out of work, the wives and daughters chop sticks, and provide almost entirely for the family; and in the instances, where the abuse of drink has drowned the home in misery, the squalor is the worst. But happily we do not find such cases

numerous, and extreme poverty through absolute scarcity of work is far more frequent. Here, for example, is the case of a labourer who only gets two days' work a week. He has a wife and three young children, and pays 2s. a week for one large-sized, dilapidated room and a cupboard-like ante-room, where on a poor bed on the floor the children sleep, though the place is really a dark closet with no window, and the only light or ventilation is obtained by a small panel being taken out of the door communicating with the living room. One is surprised, under such circumstances, to find the children looking so healthy. The living-room is bare, the meagre bed has scarcely any covering, and the poor woman, who has parted with furniture and clothes for food, hardly knows how to pay the small weekly rent. Here is another dismal home half up one of the terrace-leading steps. A labourer, in partial work, with wife and six young children, pays 2s. a week for two rooms divided by a rude partition, which give a passage way from the front door to the backlet. The rough partition shuts off the room used as coalhouse and scullery, but in place of a door two or three of the boards have simply been torn out, and in another part the room is open to the passage, and yet in this gloomy, dirty, dingy, and damp scullery and coalhouse the children sleep. The wife, who has a baby eight months old, says she is obliged to put up with it, as for the last twelve months they have scarcely known what to do owing to shortness of work, and last winter they had to seek relief. In an eight-roomed house in a court, where there are in all eighteen inmates, we find a labourer, with two days' work a week, has a wife and seven young children. They pay 2s. 3d. per week for two rooms, and but for the kind assistance of some ladies from St. Peter's Church, the wife says she does not know what would become of them. In another case, where a wife has to work to supplement the very small sum she receives from her husband, the children—unlike most of the robust little ones we generally meet with at the Hotwells—are very thin and poor, and the mother assures us she often has to send them to school without any breakfast. Where the husbands are entirely out of work, the wives, if strong, will often labour at stick chopping or at the wash tub all day to support the family, and in one of the poorest homes where the children, though ragged, were merrily playing, and the youngest was rolling on a sack on the hearth as cheerfully as though he were loling on a luxurious rug, the wife, after stick chopping all the morning, was waiting the return of her husband to "mind the baby" while she went out

to sell the sticks. She was wretchedly clad herself, and she said everything had been sold, except what she and the children were wearing. In another case, where a deal runner and his wife with three children support the wife's mother, the man has at present only two days' work a week, and the women are most industrious; and we have numerous instances of the same kind, and so much are women accustomed to help the weekly income that in one place we found the house was "let with the mangle," for which sixpence extra was put on the rent. But one of the squalidest-looking homes was that of a mechanic earning 30s. a week, with wife and five children, and paying 5s. a week for a four-roomed house. In contrast to this was the clean and cheerful home of a labourer, earning 18s. a week, keeping 2s. for his boots and clothes and pocket money, and handing his wife 16s. to provide for themselves and six young children, who, the wife said, "for the plenty of bread, but there was not much meat attached to it," still they looked very healthy, and 8d. a week out of the family income had to go for school fees. Some of the dingiest homes are to be found in the decayed old places half-way up the precipitous hillside at the back of the Hotwell road houses, and some of these places are woefully neglected and "slummy," but then they are concealed from public view, and few people see them except the humble tenants themselves.

INDUSTRIAL DWELLINGS AT JACOB'S WELLS.

In Jacob's Wells, where groups of showmen's vans and "high flyers" remind us that here for forty years during the last century stood the Theatre, whose "gorgeous lamp of copper gilt" and "farthing candles—chandeliers of tin" excited Chatterton's satirical lines—

Avarice sat brooding in her white-washed cell
And Pleasure had a hut at Jacob's Well,

there are situated the model lodging-houses of the Industrial Dwellings Company, started through the efforts of Miss Winkworth, Messrs. Lewis Fry, W. Killigrew Wait, W. H. Budgett, George Wills, W. G. George, Charles Hill, and others, with Mr. Gilmore Barnett as secretary, in 1874. The Jacob's Wells buildings were opened in 1877, and Brandon buildings in 1879. There are about eighty "lets" in all; some containing four rooms, with scullery, washing copper, water closet, and coal bin, for rents varying from 5s. 6d. to 6s. a week, free of rates and taxes; others of three rooms, with coal bin and water closet, at rents varying from 3s. 3d. to 4s. 6d.;

and single rooms from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 6d. There are a few houses to let in the Jacob's Wells buildings, but Brandon buildings, in which several modern improvements were introduced, have scarcely a room vacant; and the system of placing a caretaker on the basement and arranging for ladies to collect the rents works exceedingly well. The buildings have verandahs to each flat; there is plenty of light and ventilation, and the situation is all that could be desired. The company at one time paid 3 per cent. dividend, but during the great depression of trade this fell to 2 per cent., but the last report (1883) recorded a growing improvement. It also contained the following statement:—The health of the inmates has been far above the average of that of the working classes generally. (1) Infant mortality has been small; (2) there has never been a case of typhoid, small-pox, or malignant typhus since the buildings were opened, while scarlet fever has been of a mild type, and has never spread from one family to another." Every encouragement is given to the tenants to keep their dwellings clean—a condition of course difficult to enforce in some cases where there are large families, but this object is achieved to a very great extent. Still there is great poverty in some of the houses here, and in one case a mechanic, who only gets two days' work a week, has a wife and eight children, one of whom earns 5s. 9d. or 6s. a week. The rent is 4s. 6d. a week and during the present want of work the struggle to provide for the long family is a most severe one.

THE QUARRY.

Within a few steps of the large houses on Durdham Down are many humble dwellings in the district known as the Quarry, where many years ago an old quarry was utilised for building purposes—a steep flight of steps leading to this artificial dell on one side and a sloping road on the other, while protecting it on the west are the lofty houses of Belgrave road. At some points round the upper portion of the deep basin

the limestone rocks, now "black with the rust of age," can be seen cropping out between bits of rank grass, and on the farther side of the Sutherland terrace road, which cuts through the upper part of the quarry, a large portion of the old working remains untouched. In the two, three, and four roomed cottages are to be found many poor families suffering from the old complaint—shortness of work—and in one hut of two rooms, occupied, at 3s. per week, by a labourer, wife, and four young children, the father is out looking for work, the mother out washing clothes, and the children left at home in a sad condition. In another case a labourer, who has been out of work for two months, and has just found employment, has a wife and seven children under thirteen years; the wife helps the weekly income; and this home, like the majority here, is far more neat and comfortable than many visited at the Hotwells. We could cite many other cases of the cheerful homes of men in only partial work in this locality, and in one quaint old-fashioned place underneath the basement of a terrace the walls were crowded with little pictures, the frames of which in no case exceeded six inches in width. The tenant was a labourer, sometimes earning only 8s. or 9s. a week for the support of himself, wife, and four children. Beyond the quarry are some small houses where the conditions of cleanliness are not so well observed, and in one place the heaps of ashes and dirt almost blocked the way to a very grimy court.

Here, as at the Hotwells, there appears to be a close visitation of the poor; and, with the ample elementary school accommodation in both places, a great educational work is being accomplished. At the Hotwells no little interest is being excited on the question of improved homes of the poor. One practical man explained to us a plan which he has matured for improved dwellings with plenty of air space and light; and last week the members of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association at Hope Chapel selected the question as a subject for an interesting discussion.



CHAPTER XV.

THE DIFFICULTIES TO BE FACED.

IN bringing to a conclusion the series of articles which have now been continued in the *Mercury* for three months we are reminded that the task was undertaken with a view to showing "what has been accomplished in the past," the "condition of the homes of the poor at present," and "what remains to be done in the future." During those three months, with valued help given by clergy, ministers, School Board officers, benevolent visiting ladies, earnest and self-denying missionaries, relieving officers, philanthropists, high officials, and sanitarians, we have endeavoured faithfully to give on the first two points such information as might be useful to anyone desirous to solve the great problem of ameliorating the sad condition of the very poor. At the same time we have tried gently, and without giving offence, or wounding the feelings of the lowliest citizen, to draw aside the curtain which in the wondrous, many-sided life of a great city screens from ordinary observation the appalling misery and wretchedness of some thousands of forlorn struggling fellow creatures, and the "vast mass of unseen human suffering" of which the late Dean Stanley said "we needed constantly to be reminded." The task was one necessarily beset with difficulties, and the facts elicited, especially in one district, were so startling as we but faintly portrayed the interior of gloomy and stifling dens of filth and squalor—

Where each crammed sleeping place
Foul air distils, whose poison kills
Youth, modesty, and grace—

that to many the existence of such a state of things, within easy reach of their own pure homes in this "city of churches" and great centre of charities, seemed scarcely credible. But we were at once corroborated in these descriptions by the pulpit testimony of Church and Nonconformist ministers alike, till public attention has been keenly aroused to the consideration of our third point—"What remains to be done?" Never were pulpit and press in greater

accord than on this important question. We have before us numerous testimonies to this fact. Amongst others the Rev. U. R. Thomas, at the Redland Congregational Church, told his hearers of a number of cases known to him in which whole families lived in one room, and in the majority "not only were the children herded indiscriminately by day and night, but a common arrangement was for the parents to sleep with their heads at the head board and the children at the footboard of the bed;" and he described one of these rooms, where the walls were begrimed with smoke, the floor thick with dirt, and a heap of shavings and rags served for a bed; while in another case where a mother, a grown-up son, a daughter, and the youngest boy slept together in a room "the stench of which was so disgusting that it was almost impossible to go beyond the door." To quote another instance, the Rev. E. G. Gange spoke of persons purchasing houses in these slums, subletting every room and making 20 or 30 per cent. In the report issued last year of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the operation of the Certified Reformatories and Industrial Schools, appears, in the minutes of evidence, the valuable testimony of Mr. Mark Whitwill, who, speaking of one local industrial school, said, with regard to the girls, "I think there is not one single instance where I should like (after the expiration of the term) to send the girl back to her parents. . . . We have had cases where a whole family were living in one room, and yet a girl of 16 had to go back to such a room where she would have to sleep in the same room with grown-up brothers." He gave several of these instances, and cited one shocking case where the father (a convict) and the mother kept a disorderly house. The mother died while the girl was in the school, and Mr. Whitwill states in evidence (pp. 166-7), "The father was very anxious indeed to have her back. A superintendent of police told me that the father had had a room fitted up for the purpose of putting her

into it; and there was no doubt he hoped to live by her prostitution. I succeeded in inducing her to go to the colonies; a friend of mine out there received her and found her a home." Only last week, in conveying a gift from some benevolent person to one wretched family, we found ourselves in a very small bedroom where nine persons—father, mother, and seven children, boys and girls, the eldest a girl of 16 or 17—sleep every night, with only some old dirty sacks sewn together as a covering. Mr. David Davies, the Medical Officer of Health, in a communication to us, says: "The very poor have not utensils and appliances to carry out in their homes the usages of civilised life. They have no brushes, no besoms, no dishcloths, or house-flannels; no cooking utensils, beyond an old frying-pan—which often does duty for several families—and, possibly, a leaky old saucepan or only a meat-can in which to boil water or food. I have, positively, seen a woman make a pudding in the most objectionable utensil in the house, and I have found a whole court in St. Jude's without a single brush. These poor people have, as a rule, lost all regard for decent habits, and girls taken into service from such families can with difficulty be made to see the use of having one utensil for washing hands, one for washing greasy plates, another for clothes, and another for the preparation of vegetables for cooking as food for the family."

It is most gratifying to find that the public mind has been moved to such an extent that the Bishop of the diocese, yielding to the memorial of the clergy, has nominated a committee to inquire into the matter; and that this has still further agitated the minds of benevolent and philanthropic persons as to "what remains to be done." That they will now have the friendly aid of the Sanitary officials—to the extent to which they can go, we are assured. The quickening of public attention to the matter has given the Medical Officer of Health some of the additional assistance which, in the first or second chapters, we ventured to point out he absolutely needed for the work to be done. The extra Sanitary inspector has only been appointed a fortnight, but within a few days of our visiting Bedminster—on the first day of the new appointment—an inspector was busily at work there, and in eight or nine days no less than forty owners of dilapidated property, with decayed drains and grossly defective sanitary arrangements, were served with notices! The inspector, armed with far greater powers than we possessed, examined every house in one particular place, and in less than twenty-four hours he not only fully justified the wisdom of his appointment, but brought to light a far more deplorable and insanitary state of things

than we had discovered in the same neighbourhood. This is something practically achieved for the future good of the poor inmates of these rotting and dilapidated and dirty hovels.

DECREASE OF DRUNKENNESS.

The question of dealing with some of the most dingy and decaying dwellings where vice steals away from the light of day, and misery cowers and skulks in the background, is closely connected with one phase of moral evil, to which Mr. Whitwill incidentally referred in his evidence before the Royal Commission; but for obvious reasons we have not seen our way, in the columns of a public journal, to do more than indicate on this point the action of the clergy and others in ridding many of their parishes of such places, thus driving them into certain special parts of the city, which have purposely been left out of the scope of our inquiry. It will also have been noticed that although we have not hesitated to deal with drunkenness wherever we have found it, and to describe as forcibly as we could the forlorn condition of the poor children in the blank and bare home of drunken parents, we have not brought so prominently to the front as some might have anticipated—the temperance question. We have witnessed shocking cases of hopeless misery, destitution, indifference, and neglect of parental duty, combined with brutal wrong-doing amounting to savagery in the drunkard's home. But in the retrospect of our three months' visits to some of the worst slums and the poorest districts of the city, we find, taking many hundreds of cases visited, that these aggravated illustrations of the abuse of drink are happily limited in number. The impression we formed from actual observation that of late years, at any rate in Bristol, there has been a vast improvement in this respect, was fully borne out by the statements of the police, who in one of the most densely populated and poorest districts assured us that there is not one quarter of the actual drunkenness that prevailed twenty years ago, and courts and alleys which a constable scarcely dared enter alone at that time are now quite orderly and quiet at night. We admit that visitors coming into the poorer districts from northern towns have expressed their astonishment at the extent to which women have been seen here entering the lower class of beer houses. But even in this respect there has been a decided improvement of late years. A good number of the worst conducted beerhouses in poor neighbourhoods have been suppressed by the magistrates, and on the principle of the "survival of the fittest," landlords now holding licenses feel more responsibility and are of a better class and much

more careful as to the condition of those to whom they supply "refreshment." We were shown in a thickly populated district one house, now closed, which was formerly notoriously frequented by mothers of families living in the adjoining courts and alleys. Here they drank and gossiped their time away, pledging every thing on which they could raise any money; and on one occasion a woman was seen in the taproom stripping off her petticoat, which she "pledged for another quart." The license, however, has been forfeited, and the place knows these tipping women no more. Then, again, the active operation of the School Board, besides the manifold good it is doing in other ways, comes in as an important factor in the cause of temperate habits among the poor. The active officers in every district know as a rule whether money earned is spent in utter reckless disregard of the claims of the children, and in such cases there would be a difficulty in obtaining the remission of fees now granted in cases of deserving poverty. Thus in many ways drunkenness has been materially lessened in the city; and one of the most promising elements of the "drink question" of the future is the improved tone of the license owners and landlords themselves. We must frankly state that assertions made on public platforms led us to anticipate finding a far greater amount of drunkenness. The circumspect landlords, who are determined to keep their establishments respectable, and who are even jealous over the reputation of their houses, are increasing in number every year; and quite apart from the drink question there is at the present moment a vast amount of privation, human misery, and wretchedness in no way attributable to intemperance; while in cases where the misery is so great some would question whether a resort to drink is not the effect rather than the cause of the sad condition of many human beings.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF DWELLINGS.

In a sanitary point of view, too, with the exception of some courts in St. James's, dark spots in St. Jude's, and Baptist Mills, a few places in St. Philip's and Temple, and a comparatively limited area in Bedminster, the hopeful tone of our first chapter on the "progress already made" has been sustained. The very worst spots, so far as the housing of the poor is concerned, are the thick-walled, dark, unventilated, old tenement houses in St. James's and St. Jude's. In the former these are comparatively limited; but in St. Jude's there are scores of them with interiors rickety, crumbling, and hopelessly bad; and many of them are overcrowded—using the word in its conventional rather than in a strictly legal sense.

But even here, without fresh legislation, the Sanitary Authority, through their medical officer of health, are armed with tremendous powers by the present regulations which, however, without the supplementary aid of some philanthropic or benevolent association, they doubtless hesitate to put in full force at present lest the immediate effect would only be to overcrowd houses elsewhere with the very poor, who are only paying a rent of 1s. 6d. or 2s. a week, and are living in single rooms. It is this fear of aggravating the evils complained of that paralyses their hands and prevents them adopting any drastic measure. Like all phases of the great problem of ameliorating the wretched condition of the very poor, this housing difficulty is only to be overcome by different bodies, official and non-official, simultaneously grappling with it from all sides. Model lodging houses, apart from the drawback arising from aggregating so many families in one big building, would involve the outlay of a large capital; and there seems little disposition in Bristol, with so many new houses unlet in the suburbs, to put in force the Artisans' Dwellings Act. The proposition of the Rev. T. W. Openshaw, which appeared in the *Mercury*—in reply to the offer of a citizen through the same channel to advance £1000, "towards building more houses suitable to the needs of the poor"—presents a ready field of action, some of the houses being available at once, and the scheme we know would meet with the support of the Medical Officer of Health. It is that an association should be formed to buy or lease about 20 houses (to begin with) in St. Jude's—places with thick and substantial main walls, but with floors and staircases and partitions subdividing the rooms crumbling to pieces. The proposal is to have these thoroughly cleansed and renovated, put in a good sanitary condition, and to let them under strict conditions which would ensure compliance with cleanliness, and so far as practicable the primary conditions of morality and decency. Ladies would collect the rents, and without undue surveillance would visit the inmates and take a watchful care of them. Miss Octavia Hill has adopted the plan with success in London. Miss Winkworth and Miss Edwards have eminently succeeded in thus dealing with some houses at the Hotwells, and though these in St. Jude's would be of a poorer class there are some benevolent persons who are anxious to make the experiment. If the effort failed the present Acts contain stringent powers dealing with recalcitrant owners who might be compelled to keep their property in order—a course which the Sanitary Authority are now pursuing—but this must necessarily be far less effective for the uplifting of the inmates themselves than would the proposal just referred to, unless the

full powers of the Artisans' Dwellings Act could be put in force and the whole property acquired. As to some courts in that district, some houses in the new streets in St. Werburgh's, the courts in St. Thomas and Bedminster, little short of total demolition and reconstruction would place them in a habitable condition. In one block of courts near St. Jude's, as we have pointed out, very many of the houses have worked out their own condemnation and are closed. The courts owned by the Redcliff Vestry in Thomas street are being renovated after the model of some recently done in the Tennis Court by the churchwardens acting for the vestry; and the houses in some of the private courts are now under repair. The "blind" courts, of which there are several in St. James's, St. Jude's, Redcliff, and Temple, are those in which the conditions are far worse than in the open courts; and invariably where the houses are open to the light, with some air way and a thoroughfare, the degree of squalor is less pronounced. We have traced whole families ejected from one blind court for their hopeless squalor and filth, and found them in another court or alley still more hemmed in and blocked from the light, and where, in some dark, gloomy room, without vestige of furniture or the semblance of occupation by human beings, we have found the half-naked children dreary and joyless, huddled together over a cinder fire, keeping house where both parents were out all day. One of the best conditions in which we have found families who can afford to pay rent of 3s. per week has been in six-roomed houses in new streets in outlying districts, with good breadth of street, and garden or yard at the back—two families dividing the house between them and paying 6s. a week for the whole house. But the great difficulty with regard to housing is to provide for men, with families, who never think of paying more than 1s. 6d. to 2s. a week rent—and who have hitherto been accustomed to live in a single room, a condition which might more especially be classed as the St. Jude's type of poverty.

Mr. D. Davies, the Medical Officer of Health for the city, writing us on the subject, says:—"These people as a rule can rent only one room, and can pay only sums under 2s. 6d. a week. Such rooms (for families) are not provided for in model lodginghouses, either here or in London. The houses which have hitherto been built for the poor have not accommodated the very poor anywhere, but rather a selected class above them. I doubt whether the dwellings erected by the Peabody funds and by other means have done anything for the classes under consideration. They have, it is true, benefited the class above the very poor, persons who were able to take care of themselves; and possibly

they have in some cases prevented them descending in the social scale. These, as a class by themselves, are, to a large extent, nomadic, and as fond of personal liberty as the gipsies. Many of them are outside all religious influence and even the ordinary accompaniments of civilisation, but to attempt to make some of them Christians with their present surroundings is simply futile."

PRIVATION THROUGH WANT OF WORK.

This brings us next face to face with an unwelcome fact which has stood out with startling significance in the causes of the poverty in every populous parish in the city—the great want of work and the immense surplus of unskilled labour at present in the city. The Rev. Dr. Doudney, in an interesting letter to us, spoke of 200 men out of work in the district and vicinity of St. Luke's, Bedminster. During the past three months we came in contact with some hundreds of cases of men only getting two days' work a week throughout the populous districts. Readers of these articles must have noticed the fact mentioned prominently in every chapter. In an interview with the Medical Officer of Health he most fully confirmed our experience of this, and said:—"There are so many people out of work or only partially employed in Bristol that the suffering of these classes is intense—greater than I have ever known it. Having before me all the difficulties of distributing charity without moral injury to the recipient, I am still convinced that the present crisis is such that a public fund should be started. After all, in extremes, relief must come first—rectification of other matters afterwards. The present suffering I consider greater than that consequent on the Baptist Mills flood; and our own sanitary inspectors are compelled to give their pence to hungry women and children." We know that in a large number of cases if it were not for the men's wives earning money every week the families would either have starved or have had to go to the workhouse. And this is one of the worst features of the present work famine in the city. The skilled labourers, the mechanics, and the workmen, who have lost employment through the collapse of big undertakings and the closing of local factories, have generally sufficient strength of character and energy and enterprise to follow the work elsewhere, but the unskilled labourer either has not the spirit to do so or has become weakened or demoralised by the continued uncertainty of his employment, the extent to which he can sometimes lean upon others, and the material assistance he gets from the laborious drudgery of his wife. The latter chops sticks, labours at the wash-tub and goes out charring, or works from

morning to night on cheap tailoring, the relative positions of the bread-winner and the mother of the family being in many cases almost reversed, hence, in some of the cases we have described, the neglect of the poor children, the absence of all home training, the loss of all the little domestic comforts which make the home pleasant; and finally the crushing out of all the more refined and tender and delicate side of woman's nature, and on the other hand the hardening into callous indifference any sense of chivalric feeling of man towards woman. When the wife, who has thus taken the position of bread-winner, breaks down under pressure, the home entirely collapses, unless the children are old enough to go out to work, and in many instances during the present want of employment we have found boys engaged in little more than the capacity of errand boys, earning regularly more wages than the father of the family. In large numbers of cases the wives with long families are altogether too weak and harassed with care to work as they did in their younger days, and till the children can go out and earn money the state of the family, especially during any depression in the winter months, is deplorable. Great care is thus needed in meeting with any substantial relief the privations caused by this temporary want of labour, and it should be accompanied by every effort to rouse the head of the family to renewed attempts to find employment. Mr. Fawcett's warning cannot be too often repeated that all that is had now will become intolerably worse if anything is done to weaken the great and sacred principle of self-reliance, or to encourage men to believe that they have the right or the power to throw upon others the cost of maintaining either themselves or the children whom they are responsible for bringing into the world. Apart from all we have said, there are hundreds of unskilled labourers anxious to work for their families, but they cannot get on the average half a week's work, and some much less than that. The present time may be a crisis demanding some carefully administered temporary relief as the forerunner to other efforts to deal with the deplorable condition of many of the poor. But this is far different to frequently repeated, and periodical doles and gifts, which permanently weaken and demoralise the receiver. One clergyman assured us that when he first took to his parish he found the people had been thoroughly pauperised by the system of continuous gifts; and a Nonconformist minister in the same parish informed us that at the period spoken of so much was this particular place over-visited that one resident of a court roundly expressed herself aggrieved at having "more than she could do to answer the

door so many times a day to the visitors." We have already pointed out that in some of the older parishes where the gifts and doles have been kept up for many years there is still more to be deprecated in the dependent character of many of the poor. It should, however, be always borne in mind that those most deserving help are very often those who will make no application for it.

The special problem to be solved is this actual want of employment for the surplus unskilled labour of the city. It presses on the poor and the taxpayer alike. It is this which, in many cases, causes families to be so impoverished that elementary school fees have to be remitted and paid out of the rates to the extent of about £1000 a year—"children's school fees" alone. We have been favoured with the following returns of school fees thus remitted by the School Board or paid by the guardians, from which it will not be difficult to estimate the total amount paid in Bristol per year:

BARTON REGIS GUARDIANS.

In-parishes—1882.			
Pauper children's school fees paid (out-relief)		£252	14 0
Non-pauper ditto		£101	19 6
			£354 13 6
1883.			
Pauper ditto	ditto	£243	5 5
Non-pauper ditto		£100	9 8
			£344 15 1

BRISTOL GUARDIANS—1882.

Pauper children's school fees paid (out-relief)	£175	7 5
Non-pauper ditto	£82	7 2
		£257 14 7
Fees remitted by Bristol School Board about	£220	0 0

Last year, the School Board, with additional schools, remitted about £240. The Bedminster Guardians state that they pay in all £200 a year for school fees of pauper children and £100 for the children of non-paupers. As is doubtless well known, families not in receipt of relief, but who have become too impoverished to pay the school fees for their children, are entitled to have the fees remitted by the School Board (if at a Board school) or paid by the Guardians for any elementary school; and the parents in these cases do not lose their voting power.

But the School Board is the great social lever of the present day and the hope of the rising generation. Nothing has more convinced us of this than our visits amongst the very poor during the past three months. There is no slum so filthy and loathsome—no home so squalid and miserable, that the School Board officer does not find his way there, throwing light, often for

the very first time, upon the utterly-miserable and neglected condition of families of children—bringing the outstretched arm of the law to snatch them, at any rate, for a time, from their dulness, and squalor, and ignorance, and sloth—and giving them a chance of obtaining a share of that education by which in after-years they may find, in the enjoyment of reading, something of the charm that Sir Stafford Northcote the other day ascribed to “the old learning”—which will “refresh them when they are weary, elevate them when they are despondent, calm them when they are agitated, moderate their minds and thoughts alike when they are in prosperity, and in adversity will set before them high examples of courage and patience and wisdom and unselfishness.”

But though the School Board gives this hope for the rising generation, there is pressing need of something further being done to ameliorate the present condition of the poor, and, besides improving their houses, to raise the tone of their home life. It is with gratification we record the conviction that in by far the large majority of cases in the poorer districts the children are kindly treated and fed as fairly as the parents can afford to feed them; and in some instances we have known mothers go without food themselves in order that the children should have some before going to school. A continued hold and encouragement of the children and guidance for their good is needed on their leaving school, with some permanently established elevating influence—recreative and educational—in each densely populous and poor parish for the young people of both sexes, with periodical meetings or entertainments in which their parents can join as some means of lifting them above their present dull, monotonous, and colourless life. A parochial club such as that of St. Agnes established in connection with the Clifton College Mission in Newfoundland road, but perhaps on a less pretentious and more comprehensive plan, would be of great value in each poor district, to be used as a means by which to influence the homes where the aim may first be to inculcate the simple lesson of cleanliness, thrift, order, and pleasure-giving tidiness, in all the domestic surroundings. These clubs would not at first reach the lowliest, with whom little indeed can be done beyond better housing and encouragement to cleanliness—if even this much can be accomplished—till their wage-earning power is strengthened, and the hard struggle for bare subsistence is less keen. There are many, however, just above this class who, taking part in such clubs, might gradually, by their example, lead others up to their level; and in time the general tone of the very poor themselves might thus be raised.

If the present pressure through want of work were removed, any immediate effort for bettering the condition of the very poor will have to be made in the home itself. The district before mentioned as “over visited” was very exceptionally situated, and quite an unusual case. There are a few instances in which existing benevolent agencies overlap one another; but in the large and densely-populated districts, away from the centre of the city, there is yet needed a much closer sympathetic regard for the daily welfare of those who seem utterly helpless of themselves to find any of the ordinary domestic comforts which make home life attractive and pleasant. Happily, the time is past when the poor and the lowly and the degraded were looked upon with almost contemptuous pity, tempered with disgust and loathing at their filthy condition, and their coarse rough language learnt from their infancy—and when opinions formed of them were based on cold, “severely righteous” lines, drawn with little regard to the principle of true charity or the tender quality of mercy. As there arose in their midst new churches and chapels, which thousands of them never entered, it was found that they looked upon attendance at public places of worship as a refinement above their lowly condition. Many efforts made to reach them signally failed, till the parochial clergy, ministers and home missionaries, and voluntary workers sought a closer contact with them in the large and densely-crowded districts by the house-to-house visitation, which had been so much more readily accomplished in smaller and sparsely-populated parishes. It is this feature of the work which needs to be greatly extended, and to be carried out concurrently with other efforts, having some central organisation for direction and control. Though exceedingly sensitive, the poor quickly appreciate any kind interest in their welfare, and if their homes were gradually improved and they were supplied with the appliances of decent home life some gratifying progress might result. There must, however, be hearty co-operation amongst the ministers themselves. We once saw a clergyman gravely deliberating whether a case of distress, serious illness, and great misery just brought to light was “his side the street!” Should any fund be raised, one useful purpose to which it could be put might be to help the very poor to pay the “back rent” conditionally upon the landlord putting the house in thorough repair and a good sanitary state, so that in any fresh effort the inmates should be able to start under favourable circumstances. In many of the worst cases where houses have been entirely neglected by the landlords, it will be found that little if any rent has been paid for many weeks, and in some

instances even many months; and we could give one case where a few shillings were sent late at night to a very destitute family, and within ten minutes the landlord was there demanding a portion of the money towards a long arrear of back rent.

A HOME FOR WANDERING CHILDREN.

A special feature of the "work to be done" will necessarily bear upon the neglected children of indifferent parents, and on this point—as indicated by the recently issued report of the Reformatory and Industrial School Commissioners—there is a pressing want of a "juvenile industrial school" for utterly neglected children from six to ten years of age, often brought before the magistrates, though these cases have been lessened since the enforcement of the new by-laws as to children selling articles in the streets. The Commissioners, while reporting that the present Certified Industrial Schools are justly credited with having broken up the "gangs" of young criminals in the larger towns, and put an end to the training of boys as professional thieves, are of opinion that great advantages would result from devoting some of the existing Industrial Schools, under certain conditions, to the reception of young children, such schools being conducted and taught by women, as "at that early age all that is gentle or good in a boy's character is far more effectually developed by the influence of women than by that of men." They are strongly of opinion that some of the existing Industrial Schools should be devoted to the exclusive reception of younger children; but we believe we are right in saying that most of the local Industrial Schools are too full for such a suggestion to be carried out, and therefore a new school would have to be established.

Another feature prominently brought out in the Commissioners' report, and especially in the evidence given by Mr. Holmes-Gore, the clerk to the Bristol magistrates, is the fact that children, whose parents have purposely neglected them and sent them into the streets, are sent to a Reformatory or Industrial School, while the parents in many cases succeeded in getting off scot free, and, in fact, are rewarded by being relieved of the expense and trouble of maintaining them, owing to the extreme difficulty under the present state of the law of recovering the contributions from the parents. Few persons have any conception of the extent to which children of this class are brought before the local magistrates. In one week in Feb., of 23 prisoners on one day 12 were children. Of these 12, seven were sent to Industrial Schools or Reformatories, two were fined 5s. each for felony, two were remanded to the workhouse with the same

object, and one, after remand, was given up to his mother. One boy, under ten, sent to an Industrial School, has a mother who is a tramp, a sister about 17 on the streets, and a brother of 14 who is a trained beggar. The mother tramps over the South and West of England with a beggar, who is said to have amassed £200! In another case a girl of 12 committed three shop robberies in two nights the same week; the father, a sailor, will not be home for three months, and the mother, who is in receipt of half her husband's wages, is relieved of maintaining this child, though probably some portion of the expense will be recovered out of the father's wages. In one case a girl of 11 had been deserted at a common lodging-house by her mother, who, after being deserted by the child's father some years ago, married a man, who died last October. Recently she associated herself with another man, with whom she suddenly left the city, and the child, entirely unprotected, and found half-clad in the street, had to be sent to an Industrial School. In another case of a boy of 14, the son of a mason's labourer, who has one other boy in an Industrial School, the father consented rather unwillingly to pay a fine of 5s. inflicted by the court.

We have thus endeavoured to direct attention to some of the salient points that will probably come under consideration in the inquiry now started under such promising auspices as to the "work remaining to be done" in ameliorating the condition of the very poor. We have, in conclusion, to express our sincere obligation to all who have so kindly aided and encouraged us in the responsible task we ventured to undertake. And if we have succeeded in throwing some little light upon this great and important social question, it has only been through the co-operation of very many whose sympathies are daily awakened by constant intercourse with the poor, the lowly, and the outcast, and without whose valued aid the task could never have been accomplished.

The interesting debate in which the Prince of Wales took part in the House of Lords on Friday, Feb. 23, reminds us of the singular fitness and present application of some verses, from which we have already quoted. They were taken from *Punch*, and appeared in the *Bristol Mercury* in May, 1874. The resolve of the Government to include the housing of the agricultural classes in the Royal Commission inquiry into the condition of the homes of the poor, the active part his Royal Highness is taking in the important

question, and his modest reference to his "having had something to do with the building of fresh dwellings for the poor and labouring classes" whom he found living in a deplorable condition on the estate he acquired in Norfolk some years ago, tempt us to reproduce the poem as being singularly appropriate to the present time:—

THE COTTAGE HOMES OF ENGLAND.

The Prince of Wales began, immediately after his marriage, by building the Alexandra Cottages each entered through a pretty porch, with garden in front and rear For these are not of £4 per year is paid by the tenant. The cost of the erection of each was £185. On the whole, the Sandringham Cottages produce only about one and a half per cent. on the capital invested.—*The Hour, May 12, 1874*

"The cottage homes of England,
How beautiful they stand!"
(So once Felicia Hemans sang.)
Throughout the lovely land!
By many a shining river-side
These happy homes are seen,
And clustering round the commons wide,
And 'neath the woodlands green.

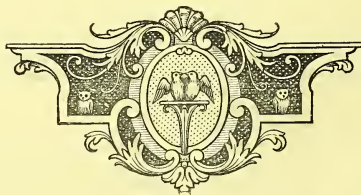
The cottage homes of England—
Alas, how strong they smell!
There's fever in the cesspool,
And sewage in the well.
With ruddy cheeks and flaxen curls,
Though their tots shout and play,
The health of those gay boys and girls
Too soon will pass away.

The cottage homes of England!
Where each crammed sleeping-place
Foul air distils, whose poison kills
Health, modesty, and grace.
Who stables horse, or houseth kine,
As these poor peasants lie,
More thickly in their straw than swine
Are herded in a sty?

The cottage homes of England!—
But may they not be made
What Poetess Felicia
In graceful verse portrayed?
With chambers where a purer air
The sleepers' lungs may bless,
And pretty porches, gardens fair?—
The Prince of Wales says, "Yes."

The cottage homes of England,
Whose aspect makes men wince,
May turn to happy dwellings yet,
With landlords like the Prince;
Then quicker brain and readier arm
And more strength better spent,
May add an economic charm
To less than two per cent.

The cottage homes of England!
The toiler gay and blithe,
Who drinks his ale, and plies his flail,
And swings his sweeping scythe,
His sons and daughters, braced anew,
With strength that nothing ails,
Will bless each Prince of landlords who
Does like the Prince of Wales.



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